

I would argue, however, that Japan's changing import profile offers major opportunities for our exporters to add value to their products prior to export, to meet the new demands of the Japanese market.

Canadian business recognizes these imperatives and is working with the federal and provincial governments to implement action plans in seven priority sectors — processed foods, fisheries products, building products, information technologies, auto parts, tourism and aerospace.

Together, these plans constitute our "Canadian Action Plan for Japan" — an integrated effort by all federal and provincial governments, in support of clearly articulated private-sector strategies, for realizing our potential in these high-priority growth sectors.

The elements of our new Action Plan include:

- placing more emphasis on building awareness of business opportunities in Japan;
- bringing more participants into the market and encouraging them to develop a strategy for five to 10 years down the road;
- establishing sectoral and regional business support networks;
- engaging industry leadership, in partnership with governments, to support small and medium-sized Canadian businesses in their export initiatives; and, most importantly,
- seriously tackling the adaptation of our product to, or indeed the design of our product for, the needs of the Japanese customer.

Twenty Canadian companies have come with me to Japan in search of both Japanese partners and the right formula to enter and expand in Japan's rapidly increasing market in three of our specific Action Plan sectors: building products, processed foods and information technologies. All 20 have attractive products and a commitment to establishing a business presence here in Japan.

We started in Fukuoka, where the reception given us by Kyushu business leaders confirmed both the wisdom of setting up an office in Fukuoka and the potential that awaits Canadian exporters there, and in Japan's other regional markets. We had several interesting and productive sessions with our friends in Fukuoka before our companies left to pursue separate programs