

will greatly facilitate the development of e-commerce.

The government plan has had major effects on the French educational system. Between the summer of 1998 and the summer of 1999, the percentage of primary schools connected to the Internet rose from 1% to 15%. The number of secondary schools with an Internet connection rose from 20% to 90%. There is currently one computer for every five children, while one teacher in five has the Internet at home. Further evidence of the success of this plan is the fact that the French public service is recognized as the most advanced in its use of the Internet and in its presence on the Internet, according to the University of Amsterdam

More than 300 multimedia products have been approved by the Ministry of Education. Games on CD-ROM do not seem to have much need of government assistance. Sales of these products in February 1999 equalled the sales for all of 1998, reaching 18 million units. The annual increase in these sales in France was the highest in Europe, namely 54% in comparison with 44% in Europe as a whole. Of the sales in France, 49% were for games, 18% for educational programs, 17% for tools, and 16% for cultural programs.

There is no reason for Canada to envy France in this regard because the "Connecting Canadians" program has areas where Canada's lead is obvious over what is being done in France. Canadian suppliers have every reason to consider the French market a high priority, whether for distance-education services or e-commerce.

B. Constraints

The most difficult hurdle for Canadian manufacturers of telecommunication products to overcome is getting their products certified as complying with European standards. The "CE" (European Union) label is required on most products entering France.

Besides this CE marking, any equipment that is connected directly to the public system must be approved by ART, the regulator of the Telecoms. This approval is different for every country of the European Union, except for certain products whose standards are set on the European level, such as GSM. In the latter case, once compliance with the basic requirements has been certified in one European country, the products can be marketed everywhere in the EU.

Insofar as partnerships and investments are concerned, Canada and Canadian companies will find that the French market is very competitive. French companies do not automatically think of Canadian counterparts when looking for partners. Continual concerted efforts are needed to keep Canada figuring prominently on the list of French priorities.

C. Activities

Canada and France have a joint working group in this sector that encourages meetings and discussions among companies from both countries. On average, two activities are organized a year, one in Canada and the other in France. The topics of the most recent meetings were e-commerce and the security of electronic transfers.

i) Information about the French and European Markets

Organizing meetings between the people responsible for this sector in Canada and France, at which interested parties are informed about changes in the regulations and French industrial