

INTRODUCTION

As with many activities today, the business of engineers requires an awareness and understanding of events unfolding beyond the borders of Canada, and indeed North America, in order to comprehend the challenges and opportunities emerging in an interdependent and dynamic global marketplace. To this end, the following pages review a broad range of issues which contribute in shaping the nature of this marketplace and which can have a profound impact upon the ability of Canadian firms to compete effectively in an increasingly complex environment.

The first section reviews the importance of international transactions to the Canadian consulting engineering sector and assesses the current success of Canadian firms vis-à-vis their competitors abroad. Section two examines developments in the international economy which have a significant bearing on the volume of international project activity and the ability of Canadians to continue to compete effectively for these projects. Particular emphasis is placed on the impact of the external debt of developing countries and the marketing tools employed by Canada's competitors such as concessional financing and mixed credits. This section also reviews the nature and potential impact of the current round of multilateral trade negotiations and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.