

## OPPORTUNITIES IN THAILAND — *Continued from page 18*

### Energy and natural resources

Strong economic growth has sparked a sharp increase in demand for energy that shows no signs of slowing. There is virtually no local production in Thailand; 90 per cent of all power, equipment and services are imported. There are opportunities for Canada to increase its current 17 per cent share of the market, particularly with the current plans to reorganize and privatize the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand.

### Construction and building products

Areas of opportunity for Canadian exporting companies include interior finishes, residential roofing systems, wood (lumber and furniture grade), curtain-walling, energy efficient doors and windows, component technology for mass production of sections, specialized concrete technology (prestressed, modular, lightweight), and technology, products and services related to infrastructure projects.

Increasingly severe labour shortages, rising costs and intensified competition have created growing demand for prefabricated technology and products. Prefabricated components represent the best export opportunities for Canadian companies. The do-it-yourself market for building hardware is an emerging subsector in Thailand, and opportunities are increasing for the supply of knobs, hinges, pulls and braces, door stops, catches and latches.

### Financial services

The Thai finance ministry has approved the upgrade of seven offshore bank branches into full service bank branches, including the Bank of Nova Scotia. New Bangkok International Banking Facilities (BIBF) licences will also be granted as part of the expected liberalization of the financial sector. The BIBF upgrade is part of a five-year plan to liberalize Thailand's financial industry by 2000 and to meet WTO commitments. The upgrade will allow foreign banks to strengthen their operations in Thailand and allow Thai banks to gradually become globally competitive financial institutions.

### Environmental industry

Interest in the environment is expanding throughout Asia. In July 1996, environment ministers from the 18 member countries of APEC adopted an action program to improve the urban environment by co-operating on issues such as sustainable cities, clean technology and clean production. As the Thai government and the private sector respond to the growing pollution problem in the country, there will be increased opportunities for Canadians in the sale of environmental technology.

### Information technology and telecommunications

Despite governmental investment in information technology, some projects have been scaled down due to inadequate budgets and lack of trained personnel. Canadian firms will need to partner with strong national partners to win government contracts.

Advanced telecommunications products and equipment are readily available in Thailand. However, fixed telephone service is inadequate and the existing infrastructure cannot meet growing demand. There are opportunities for Canadians in installation and service to meet the government's target of 12 million fixed lines by the year 2001 — double the current number.

### Education

Thailand is aggressively upgrading its educational facilities, equipment and curricula. Good opportunities exist for suppliers of more traditional education products such as desks, audiovisual equipment and books. The market for scientific equipment and analytical instruments is increasing by 5 per cent annually. Growth in demand for computers is even greater, with an average 40 per cent annual growth.

Canadian universities and other educational institutions will find good business opportunities in English as a Second Language and summer or semester break

*Continued on page 20 — Opportunities in Thailand*