INTRODUCTION

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The European Single Market initiative is a comprehensive legislative program designed to allow the free movement of labour, capital, goods and services among the Community's twelve member states.

Roughly 30 per cent of the 279 directives that comprise the initiative deal directly with technical standards. The European Community's standards program also includes the six European Free Trade Association countries: Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. It is estimated that between 8,000 -10,000 new standards will be written to satisfy the legislative agenda. The effort is so massive that the standards developed will likely become international and will have to be met in order to enter many non-European markets.

This study relies on the experience of Canadian enterprises in the area of standards. It is not another theoretical discussion. The case studies were constructed from a series of telephone interviews with members of the Canadian business community. The interviews were supplemented with a survey sent out by facsimile. The study's main aim is to aid businesses who are on the verge of entering the European market (or who have a European presence already and wish to remain there in the changing environment) by providing them with examples of the various methods successfully employed by firms of differing sizes and from a selection of sectors. It is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Accordingly, the opinions expressed in the case studies are those of the firm in question.

The standard setting process in Europe is complex. It is useful, therefore, to first outline the types of technical barriers which exist, the European Agenda, the challenges these present to Canadian business and, finally, the key findings of this study.