

governments and other sectors of our society to meet the pressing competitive challenges facing Canada.

The Steering Group, led by David McCamus and Marie-Josée Drouin, received hundreds of submissions and heard views from thousands of Canadians involved in the nationwide consultation process. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Judy, and the members of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada, for making a key contribution to these consultations.

Yesterday, the Steering Group released its national Action Plan, which is directed at all sectors of our society. The Plan should help all of us to work together: first, to create opportunities by building an innovative society; second, to create a learning culture; and, finally, to create a more inclusive society.

The Plan focuses on creating opportunities by building an innovative society, including

- increasing use of science and developing technology to bring new products from the lab to the market;
- expanding financing opportunities to support the creation of a more entrepreneurial economy;
- building a strong domestic market in Canada from which we can take on the world; and
- trading smarter in new and traditional markets to capture a larger share of global trade, investment and technology flows.

The Plan reflects the Steering Group's conviction that the keys to achieving these goals are innovation and quality management practices, in both the private and the public sectors, combined with technological mastery and growing productivity. The Plan recommends specific actions that focus on customer needs and on making Canada a leader in quality. It also recommends actions to improve consumer education.

Improving our education and training systems and building a new learning culture for Canada form the second element of the Action Plan. This part focuses on developing results and competence-based systems, promotion of innovation, and partnerships for excellence in learning.

Overall, the Plan focuses on ensuring that Canadians become aware of the value of learning and have access to a lifetime of learning opportunities. By building on learning opportunities, Canada can become a truly inclusive society in which all Canadians have a fair opportunity to participate fully. This third element of the Plan calls for an integrated approach to