

their problems, and then refer them to the information, services, and programs that they need to innovate, develop, and succeed in the global marketplace. While the CTN is not focused solely on IBD, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is working to ensure that IBD interests are prominent, and to extend CTN's coverage of information and services sources beyond Canada's borders. CTN is also an Internet based network of WebSites that describes the offerings that the CTN advisors, associate members (300 public sector members) and other information and service providers have available in support of Canadian SMEs. With its new association with the Canadian Advanced Technology Association, CTN will be focusing more on recruiting private sector members, some of which may offer information or services for a fee.

(b) That when Canadian SMEs require services that are not normally provided by government, they should be given a list of private sector providers and a description of the kinds of services they can offer. DFAIT should use existing channels of communication and dissemination of information to make this list available to both Canadian SMEs and private sector service providers; and

As discussed above, reference to other public and private sector providers is being made in many of the on-line networks, including STRATEGIS, Contact! The Canadian Management Network, and the Canadian Technology Network. With reference to international sources for private sector providers, while efforts are being made in the networks to increase these listings, this is not always possible.

Trade commissioners respond individually to each company's request for market information and intelligence. When a Canadian company requests services that are available from alternative sources, and thus not provided by the government, the company is referred to the alternative sources. Referrals are often made to lawyers, accountants, and credit agencies. As these sources, both private and public, can vary from one overseas market to another, and constantly change, a central listing of alternative service providers is not practical.

(c) The government should, upon request and based on predetermined criteria, assist SMEs with funds to access information regarding financing, market development and market intelligence services where a fee is charged by the private sector. (page 38)

The government already devotes considerable resources to providing SMEs with MI/I. MI/I available to SMEs includes individualized responses from trade commissioners to each company's request; market information reports that are relevant to several firms, or a subsector, as identified by National Sector Teams; or market intelligence which the trade commissioners relay to capable Canadian exporters. The government has established the International Business Opportunities Centre, and the Market Research Centre. It has also provided access, especially on-line, to this and other MI/I as detailed above.

The government believes that information obtained with government funds, whether from Canadian or foreign private sector sources, should be made available to all Canadian companies, and that decisions as to the nature of the information to be obtained should be made by the National Sector Teams. Existing government programs, such as PEMD, provide financial incentives to allow small business to confirm market intelligence and cement market development by visiting select target markets.

14. The Committee recommends that the government pursue opportunities to make full use of Canada's linguistic, multicultural and geographic advantages as follows:

(a) Canadian business should take greater advantage in international markets of the fact that Canada's official languages are two of the world's main international business languages;

The government fully endorses the Committee's recommendation.

(b) SMEs that are pursuing international business opportunities should take full advantage of the linguistic and cultural ties that members of Canada's ethnocultural communities have with their countries of origin. These linkages with countries around the world represent a significant but unrealized export asset for Canadian businesses and could play an important role in creating