

3.4 INTERNATIONAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The international marketplace for goods, services and investment is evolving quickly and becoming more complex and competitive. This dynamic environment contains both threats and opportunities for Canada. These factors are compounded by new phenomena such as the introduction of the euro currency, preparations for the Y2K computer challenge and the rise of e-commerce worldwide. In response to these forces, IBD activities must ensure that Canadian firms exporting or seeking strategic investment or technology alliances abroad have access to the quality services and support they need to competitively pursue business opportunities. This includes guidance on how to best capitalize on market access openings and economic liberalization abroad. The federal government cannot operate independently in this environment, and should play a leadership role in involving the provinces, business associations and other private sector partners, with the objective of securing more business and greater economic prosperity for Canada. Team Canada Inc is ideally structured to act in that capacity.

3.4.1 INITIATIVES

Improving Service to Canadian Business

TCI will expand and broaden its information dissemination network to improve access for both novice and experienced exporters. The International Business Opportunities Centre (IBOC), an integral part of TCI, continues to enhance its client services. IBOC distributes, in a timely manner, market intelligence and export business leads, identified by trade officers abroad, to Canadian suppliers who are often looking to make their first export sale. The Market Research Centre continues to produce and update sectoral foreign market reports. These are distributed over the Internet to meet the market information needs of prospective Canadian goods and services exporters.

TCI's export financing and insurance provider, the Export Development Corporation (EDC), plans to serve more exporters, support greater business volumes and generate a rate of return that will support future growth. EDC's strategic direction is to improve further its contribution to Canada's export efforts by specifically increasing the number of SMEs served. This will be achieved by expanding EDC's network of intermediaries/partners and researching new distribution channels. It will also develop a strategy to attract larger accounts. These measures are expected to increase the number of EDC clients, and improve client satisfaction and retention rates. Improvement efforts will focus on internal management adjustments to deal with increased client demand, and on developing relationships in key markets for international projects, including high-risk business.

Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) in its export sales agency role will continue to provide advice and assistance to exporters in difficult markets. CCC's contracting expertise, particularly in foreign government and multilateral organization procurement, will continue to benefit an overwhelming proportion of SMEs in its expanding client community. Like EDC, CCC will strive to increase both the volume of transactions and the number of clients served.

The computer-based WIN Exports Client Management System, which includes Posts abroad, federal and provincial departments and agencies, continues to be upgraded as an internal client management tool for TCI. The system allows more effective business sourcing and matching, client communications, networking and service transaction tracking. WIN is also becoming a central feature in the annual client survey process, aimed at identifying strengths and improving weaknesses in support of further service improvements.

The Agri-Food Trade Service (ATS) will continue to expand its services, including on-line information dissemination, to a range of potential, new and experienced exporters of value-added food products. The ATS Online Internet facility is expected to be used by a growing number of clients.