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Department of Trade and Industry:
<http://www.dti.gov.uk>

European Information Technology Observatory:
<http://www.eito.com>

Independent Television Commission:
<http://www.itc.org.uk>

Office of Telecommunications:
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk>

Office of National Statistics:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

A weekly newsletter called *IT Events Bulletin*
is available from [emedia-uk](http://www.emedia-uk.com):
<http://www.ebulletins.co.uk>

Major Shows

BETT 2002, British Education, Training and
Technology Show, London, January 9-12, 2002:
<http://www.bettshow.com>

For the educational technology sector

ECTS 2001, European Computer Trade Show,
London, September 2-4, 2001:
<http://www.ects.com>

Major European show for the computer games
and entertainment market.

ZDNet UK publishes a list of upcoming ICT
events regularly on its Web site at:
<http://www.zdnet.co.uk/events>

CONSTRUCTION and BUILDING PRODUCTS

Market Overview

The UK builds approximately 190,000 new housing units a year, a number that has remained fairly static over the last five years. This is not forecast to change significantly, although in 1996 the British government announced a requirement for 4.4 million new homes by 2016 to meet domestic demand, suggesting that approximately 220,000 units per annum would be required.

The private housing sector, which is the largest, has been particularly buoyant in the last three years, given relatively low interest rates and improved consumer confidence. The majority of the large housebuilders have all seen profits rise, with the average value of properties increasing. The trend is now towards larger detached/duplex properties of three and four bedrooms. The demand for housing follows the requirements of the population, with the number of households in England set to rise by 15.2% in the next 20 years.

Of greater significance is the market for renovation and refurbishment. The UK has one of the oldest housing stocks in Europe, with around one half of the country's 23 million dwellings being 50 to 100 years old or more. In the last five years, this sector has grown 11%. Forecasts indicate that this sector will grow a further 11% in the next five years, fuelled by increased spending in the public housing sector. In mid-1998, the government announced plans to release £3.6bn of capital for the refurbishment of more than 1.5 million properties.

The UK residential construction industry, which is going through a period of rapid change, is responding to three critical issues.

Skills shortages, rising construction costs and defects associated with onsite wet trades have created a trend towards offsite production and a demand for new, innovative products that "de-skill" the construction site. This is coupled with a greater acceptance of framing systems, particularly wood frame, which is taking significant market share from

traditional block construction. Canadian manufacturers are in an excellent position to supply this wood-frame market in the short term, while the domestic industry is still adjusting its domestic manufacturing capability to meet local demand, since demand for wood-framed homes is likely to outstrip domestic supply in the next 18 to 24 months. In the long term, successful Canadian companies could develop supply partnerships with small to medium-sized homebuilders that do not have their own manufacturing capability.

New building regulations requiring higher thermal insulation and greater energy efficiency, which are to be phased in over the next couple of years, are likely to be much more difficult to achieve with traditional masonry construction than with wood frame. Also, these new standards will likely require improvements to key components such as windows and doors, better ventilation and heat exchange systems, all areas in which many Canadian suppliers have considerably more experience and better products.