

business-oriented organizations. It will also expand efforts to make information directly available to clients on the information highway.

- **Business Networks** — Business networks allow successful SMEs from any economic sector to co-operate and collaborate in seeking business opportunities. They can also help SMEs acquire world-class business skills, gain access to new financial instruments and capital, capitalize on their competitive advantages, and expand into global export markets. To complement the many regional and sectoral business network initiatives going on across the country, the Government will work to conclude an agreement with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to undertake a National Business Networks Demonstration Project. The project will provide for broad dissemination of information, regional round tables, network broker training, and support for business networks in a number of economic sectors and regions of Canada.

Private-sector Involvement

Ensuring that government resources devoted to international business meet the needs of Canadian industry is essential to achieving our international business development objectives. The Government will therefore expand private-sector involvement in the following areas:

- **Trade Fairs and Missions Program** — The Government will invite the exporting business community to become more actively involved in developing the Government's trade fair program. To this end, government resources will be focussed on major fairs that have the support of Canadian business. To enhance the efficiency of outgoing trade missions, a system of cost-sharing will also be implemented to ensure that participating firms are serious about the market and that they are genuinely export-ready. In addition, innovative ways to meet the special needs of new service exporters will be explored.

- **Program for Export Market Development (PEMD)** — To encourage smaller firms to become active exporters, the Government will focus PEMD resources on firms that have annual sales of less than \$10 million — those most likely to benefit from government support. Accordingly, eligibility criteria for funding under PEMD will be revised so that preference is given to such firms. To better serve the serious exporter, the Market Development Strategies portion of PEMD will also be changed so assistance can be provided for the implementation of a company's two-year marketing plan, beyond the existing one-year option.

Industry involvement in the preparation of the International Trade Business Plan (discussed in the next section) will also be strengthened.

- **Export Preparation/Preparedness** — A key component of helping Canadian firms become successful exporters of goods and services is to ensure that they are export-ready. The Government will therefore encourage potential new exporters to enrol in export preparation programs, such as those offered by the Forum for International Trade Training (FITT). Consideration is also being given to developing a FITT program for service exporters. A multimedia kit on the topic of preparing to export services will be released in the near future, with emphasis on several specific markets.
- The Government will also explore how to improve service for companies by linking the level of government service available to them to their level of export-readiness. This could be achieved by adopting a "filtering-in" approach, whereby appropriate government resources would be focussed on companies that are genuinely export-ready (and therefore more likely to succeed in the international marketplace).
- **Aboriginal Exporters** — Canada's Aboriginal entrepreneurs have demonstrated a growing ability to market their products and services internationally. Culturally based sectors such as