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CANADA'S BUSINESS CULTURE

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CANADA'S BUSINESS CULTURE

Industry, Science and Technology Canada

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FOREWORD

The attitudes of Canadians toward competitiveness and the country's overall business culture have emerged as central themes in recent discussions on Canada's future prosperity. This background paper brings together some of the relevant research and literature on the subject. The report concludes that changing our attitudes about competitiveness and entrepreneurship could mean the difference between success and failure of Canadian business people in the ever-changing world marketplace. It also notes there are several interpretations for the material available, suggesting a need for further research in this area.

This paper was prepared by a working group of officials at Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC). Norm Levesque chaired the group; Alan Sobel was principal analyst and author; and Susan MacKenzie provided research assistance. Other members of the working group included Geoff Cosgrove, Manny Chetcuti, Guy Lorrman, Yves Moisan and Janet Ferguson. The views expressed do not reflect those of the Department or the Government of Canada.

For more information or for copies of this report or the study *Canadian Attitudes toward Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship*, by Joseph F. Fletcher, professor of political science at the University of Toronto, please contact:

ISTC
Business Service Centre
1st Floor, East Tower
235 Queen Street
OTTAWA, Ont.
K1A 0H5

Tel.: (613) 952-ISTC
Fax: (613) 957-7942

or any of the ISTC Business Service Centres listed at the end of this report.

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Executive Summary

1. This paper suggests that a strong entrepreneurial and innovative culture is a precondition to competitiveness. As the technological and trading forces that shape commerce change rapidly, the development of a business culture more oriented toward the recognition, acceptance and exploitation of change could lead business people to act in competitive ways. Entrepreneurial and innovative attitudes are prerequisites to developing competitive organizations — organizations that motivate and train their employees, that seek and implement best-practice technologies, that seek new market opportunities and that are able to adapt to the changing exigencies of the business climate. There are at least two schools of thought on whether or not Canadians' attitudes support entrepreneurship and competitiveness — one school says they do; the other contends they do not. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Canadians' behaviour is not always entrepreneurial or inspired by competition. This paper suggests that Canadians should be entrepreneurial about management, science and technology (S&T), trade, sustainable development, and education.
2. Within organizations, managers are the vanguard of change. Since it is their responsibility to be innovative and to introduce and champion new attitudes and approaches within their organizations, they should be the primary targets of awareness campaigns.
3. There is a low level of scientific literacy in Canada. Many Canadians do not believe that science has an impact upon their economic well-being. Many are of two minds about the rapid pace of change in S&T, unsure whether this is good or bad. There is a need to heighten the awareness of all Canadians about the importance of S&T and, in particular, to improve the private sector's understanding of and appreciation for S&T so companies will be persuaded to acquire and effectively introduce best-practice technologies into their operations.
4. Canadians' outward orientation remains underdeveloped. While Canadian firms are beginning to think *North American*, few companies in the competitive high technology sector, for instance, have developed strategies for trading in the U.S. under the terms of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
5. In general, the business community lacks confidence in its prospects outside North America, and this is reflected in the view others hold of Canadians: that they are *nice* people but not aggressive in business.
6. Widespread concern for the environment has meant that private sector projects should be, and be perceived to be, environmentally sound. Firms are beginning to recognize that *greenness* represents both a market opportunity and a sound business investment when the introduction of environmentally friendly production technologies results in lower unit costs, or when new business lines are developed from recycled wastes.

Moreover, opportunities have been created for so-called *environmental industries*, which produce environmentally friendly technologies.

7. Many argue that schools could help instil entrepreneurial values and develop entrepreneurial skills in their students by teaching different courses and adopting different teaching methods.
8. Canadian industry has invested little in education, yet most Canadians would trade wage gains for training. If Canadians are to develop the skills needed to participate in a global trading environment, industry could find new ways to provide workers with ongoing opportunities to learn new skills. Industry could also take an interest in young students at schools, colleges and universities by introducing them to the world of business through collaborative arrangements.
9. In pinning their faith on business to create jobs and boost economic prosperity, governments in Canada have sometimes been led into services, programs and promotions that, paradoxically, do not make good business sense. Governments should always be wary of their natural proclivity to intrude into the affairs of the private sector. It follows that governments should also be wary of trying to *impose* a business culture on Canada.
10. In recent years, the federal government has developed a business framework that encourages trade and investment. It has increased and improved its communications and consultations with the business community. Yet in many cases these efforts are not coordinated between ISTC and other departments. There is also room for improvement in ISTC's dialogue with industry, particularly with unions, on the question of developing appropriate entrepreneurial attitudes toward management, S&T, trade, conservation and training. Such improved dialogue would permit ISTC to achieve a better understanding of its most important client group — the private sector — so that it can design, target and market its policies, programs and services more effectively.

Introduction

1. A culture is a complex system of inherited values, beliefs and attitudes by which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and conceptions of life. It is embodied in symbols, customs and traditions and is shaped by institutions and changing economic circumstances. Cultures are the sum of their histories. Most often they are slow to change, but significant events that imply or foster specific values can precipitate cultural change.
2. Values about economics and commerce are important elements of a societal culture. A business culture consists of the values, beliefs and attitudes that influence commerce and that determine the extent and way in which business, labour, government and other players participate in this activity. A dynamic business culture, it seems, develops out of a social environment that places a high value on entrepreneurship, competitiveness and excellence.
3. Depending on its underlying values, Canada's business culture can either help or impede its ability to respond to rapid technological change, globalization and other new phenomena now challenging traditional ways of doing business. Canada's business culture will determine how receptive Canadian firms are to adopting the entrepreneurial and innovative behaviour necessary for successful business actions in the 1990s.
4. The focus of this paper is Canada's business culture — in particular, Canadians' attitudes about entrepreneurship and innovation, management, S&T, trade and education. The paper also discusses sustainable development, because public concern for the environment is beginning to have a strong influence on the way Canadian businesses behave.
5. In the 1990s and beyond, Canadians must confront several phenomena that are changing the way they do business:
 - liberalized trade, the emergence of regional trading blocks and the growing interdependence of foreign firms and markets (globalization) are making Canadian firms more vulnerable to competition from foreign producers; and
 - rapidly changing technology has precipitated a flow of high-quality, and sometimes lower-cost, goods and services into the marketplace, changing the stakes and pace of business decisions.

6. There is reason to believe that Canadian manufacturers are not responding to these challenges:
- The FTA has opened new market opportunities for Canadian goods and services. Yet, according to the management consulting firm of Ernst & Young, 72 percent of domestic manufacturers are Canadian firms with no significant U.S. market presence or exports. Of the more than 20 000 Canadian manufacturing firms listed on ISTC's Business Opportunities Sourcing System (BOSS), less than one-half export their products to the U.S. Moreover, as Canadian firms are exposed to stiffer U.S. competition under the terms of the FTA, they will need to seek opportunities in extra-North American markets to grow and survive.
 - Some evidence suggests that Canadian business has not invested enough in technological or human resource skills required to reduce costs, improve quality and stay competitive. For example:
 - ▶ According to the Economic Council of Canada, Canada is three to five years behind other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in the adoption of key strategic technologies. Isaiah Litvak and Stanley Warner, professors of administrative studies at Toronto's York University, have said: "There can be little doubt that Canadian managerial attitudes are not supportive of early adoption and diffusion of new technology."
 - ▶ A few large companies in Canada, like IBM Canada Ltd. and Bell-Northern Research (BNR), have made significant investments in training their employees. But preliminary data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Human Resource Development and Training show that in 1987 about 75 percent of the firms surveyed did not provide any formal training for employees. Canadian employers spent only about \$1.4 billion on training — less than 0.3 percent of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) and less than one-half of U.S. expenditures on a per employee basis.
7. Attitudes and beliefs are held deeply *sentiments*, never understood fully by an observer. However, they may be inferred by what people say and do. To try to understand Canada's business culture, what Canadians say and do about these subjects is examined through statistical evidence of behaviour, public opinion polls and the expressed views of ISTC's clientele.

Entrepreneurship and Competitive Attitudes in Canada

8. To equip itself for the challenges of the 21st century, Canada must develop an entrepreneurial or *innovative* culture that reaches into every corner of society. An entrepreneurial culture fosters the values of competitiveness and excellence and embraces change. It encourages individuals to challenge the status quo by making calculated investments of their time, energy and money in ideas they believe will improve an existing condition.
9. Entrepreneurs are not just small business persons; innovators are not just scientists, engineers or inventors. Teachers, volunteers, managers and public servants may all act in entrepreneurial or innovative ways by proposing new ideas about what should be done and how.
10. A strong entrepreneurial culture across society — one that anticipates, accommodates and precipitates change — is an important precondition of competitiveness. In such a culture, business activity is perceived as acceptable and desirable — in other words, as normal behaviour rightfully occupying a predominant place in the life of society. Members of such societies are willing to take risks to meet individual or collective challenges, and to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. They value perseverance and determination, view failure as a learning experience and are increasingly willing to accept change. In a firm valuing entrepreneurship, all levels of the organization are conditioned to embrace the skills, work programs, organizational changes and technologies that may be needed to stay ahead of competitors.
11. In its *Focus 2000 Report on Harnessing Change*, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce suggests that Canadians should accept a new model of economic transformation in which individuals and communities assume direct responsibility for their development. Canadians should be creative rather than passive and capable of self-initiated action rather than dependent. They will need to be flexible and to know how to learn and relearn throughout their lives. They will need to be entrepreneurial in their outlook.
12. In its report, *Keeping Canada Competitive: The Innovation Imperative*, presented to the Prime Minister in May 1989, the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology (NABST) Private Sector Challenge Committee states:

We must build the individual and collective commitment to establishing an innovation culture in Canada.

Creating an innovative culture will challenge conventional Canadian attitudes and practices. It will lead to some disruption that must be addressed appropriately. However, over the long term it will create a vibrant economy and new opportunities for those willing to seize them.

13. Many Canadian observers believe that, in general, Canadians do not subscribe to entrepreneurial values. According to the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education, entrepreneurial endeavour is less honoured in Canada by both schools and businesses than it is in the U.S., Japan, Britain or other European countries.

14. As sociologist Kaspar Naegle of the University of British Columbia puts it:

In Canada there seems to be a greater acceptance of limitation, of hierarchical patterns. There seems to be less optimism, less faith in the future, less willingness to risk capital or reputation. In contrast to America, Canada is a country of greater caution, reserve and restraint.

15. The Chamber of Commerce has suggested that Canada's culture is averse to risk and lacks entrepreneurial spirit. Canadians are passive about opportunities and prefer to save through instruments such as Treasury Bills and RRSPs rather than invest their earnings in commercial ventures directly.

16. A central thesis of *Continental Divide*, Seymour Lipset's recent comparative study of Canadian and American culture,¹ is that Canadians' attitudes about business and work are less optimistic, less willing to take risks, less committed to work, less achievement-oriented and more concerned about *proper* relationships and quality of life than are their American counterparts. These attitudinal differences, he argues, stem from the American revolution, and the corresponding settlement of Loyalists in Canada. Each event "establish[ed] values and predispositions [in each country], and these in turn affect[ed] later events."

17. Lipset writes:

The very organizing principles that framed these nations, the central cores around which institutions and events were to accommodate, were different. One [America] was Whig and classically liberal or libertarian — doctrines that emphasize distrust of the state, egalitarianism, and populism — reinforced by a voluntaristic [sic] and religious tradition. The other [Canada] was Tory and conservative in the British and European sense — accepting of the need for a strong state, for respect for

¹ As Lipset would likely acknowledge, comparing cultures is often like comparing apples and oranges. However, Canadian and American life is in many respects so similar that comparing the two cultures amounts to comparing differences in emphases which, far from being unalterable, can be nudged over time in one direction or another.

authority, for deference — and endorsed by hierarchically organized religions that supported and were supported by the state.... Canada has been and is a more class-aware, elitist, law-abiding, statist, collectivity-oriented [sic], and particularistic [sic] (group oriented) society than the U.S. These fundamental distinctions stem in large part from the American Revolution and the diverse social and environmental ecologies flowing from the division of British North America. The social effects of this separation were then reinforced by variations in literature, religious traditions, political and legal institutions, and socio-economic structures.

18. In line with this *socio-historical* approach to mapping Canada's business culture, several other events or structural circumstances have been attributed to contributing to Canadian attitudes to competition and entrepreneurship:

- Canada's abundant natural resources, stable political climate and relatively open borders have always attracted adventurers and other immigrants. Throughout Canada's history, waves of immigrants, most recently from Southeast Asia, have stimulated the growth of the entrepreneurial class in Canada.
- The early trading nations that fished Canada's shores, the founding nations and successive governments have never doubted the capacity of the land and its people to support entrepreneurs and their businesses. According to University of Toronto history professor, Michael Bliss, in his study of Canadian business history, *Northern Enterprise*, it is this optimism that led successive governments to promote opportunities or to intervene directly in the economy, sometimes in the absence of sound business judgment, and often with negative results.
- Canada's resource riches are not easy to get at and entrepreneurs are further handicapped by a small, widely dispersed domestic market and high transportation costs. The survival of early Canadian enterprise depended upon capturing supply and securing European, then American, markets. Over time, these circumstances did not change substantially, and consequently, enterprise in Canada has traditionally sought monopolistic or oligopolistic positions. These large companies, or groups of companies, have often stifled within themselves the very entrepreneurial spirit that helped them to grow.
- Confederation, and each successive entry of a provincial jurisdiction into the union, altered fundamentally the economic vitality of participating economic regions and affected the political culture of the new Canadians. A series of political compromises assured entering jurisdictions they would receive an

equitable share of the national wealth. The ongoing process of wealth redistribution, an effort that is sanctified in the Constitution and enshrined in a series of legislated revenue transfer programs, has tended to dampen the entrepreneurial spirit of Canadians and increase their reliance on governments.

- Despite these initiatives, cultural, political and economic regionalism persists in Canada, with consequences that are often detrimental to the business community. It is true that Canadian regions are better positioned commercially for north-south trade than for east-west trade among themselves. Nevertheless, interprovincial trade barriers, rooted in parochial interests, curtail artificially east-west trade in many goods and services — at considerable expense to all Canadians.
- Regionalism also is evident in the centre-periphery economic relationship that has developed between Ontario and the other Canadian provinces. The structural differences implied in this relationship, including the preponderance of large, resource-based firms with small groups of local suppliers in the periphery, and many more large, knowledge-based firms seeking world markets located in the centre, has resulted in a regionally varied business culture in Canada. Accordingly, the federal government's ability to influence culture may differ significantly across the country.
- Canada's commitment to weapons supply during the Second World War rapidly improved its manufacturing capability, but the *visible hand* of government employed at that time changed fundamentally business-government relations in Canada. In the ensuing decades, government's incursions into the business arena intensified, with the result that Canadian business became more aligned with government interests and less entrepreneurial in spirit.

19. In a recent study, titled *Canadian Attitudes toward Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship*, Joseph F. Fletcher, professor of political science at the University of Toronto, has suggested that these views on Canadian's attitudes toward competition and entrepreneurship may be relics that, somehow, have achieved mythical status among many Canadians:

Too often, bits and pieces of evidence on Canadian and American values are assembled from hither and yon, and then subjected to intensive theoretical inspection. The differences, often quite subtle, that have turned up are frequently magnified into emblems of a major cultural divide by social theorists interested for one reason or another in accentuating the distinctiveness of Canadian culture. Given certain types of theory-driven amplification, a matter of emphasis or degree can quickly be turned to a difference of kind, and something that

once was true can be frozen in time as if nothing ever changes.... Over even so short a time as a generation or two, profound changes in basic values can occur often in quite unsuspected ways. To know what Canadians value today requires more than historical insight; it requires that we survey our basic values.

20. Professor Fletcher's study is based upon comparisons between American and Canadian attitudinal survey research data that were conducted in exactly the same way. The key findings of his study are:

- Canadians value achievement, believe in rewarding merit and welcome the benefits of competition to a high degree:
 - ▶ More than 70 percent of Canadians believe that people with greater ability should earn higher salaries, and 75 percent believe that people who do get ahead do so as a result of ability and hard work.
 - ▶ Approximately three-quarters of Canadians believe that competition is a good thing, and that it brings about better performance and a desire for excellence.
- Compared with the Americans, Canadian attitudes toward excellence, merit and competition are favourable. Indeed, on some dimensions, Canadians are more committed to entrepreneurial values than are Americans. To the extent that Canadians demonstrate ambivalence about the limits of competition in social and economic life, this ambivalence is shared by the Americans.
- The high value Canadians place upon merit and competition extends across most demographic variables. Even union members and recent immigrants prize these values in accordance with the norm. There are two important exceptions. First, there is a noticeable downward trend in the extent to which these values are esteemed in people born after 1955. Although this may be attributable to time of life, there is compelling evidence that these attitudes may also signal a significant change in the attitudes of Canadians. Second, Francophone women demonstrate consistently low esteem for competition and merit values.

21. Given Professor Fletcher's results, there is some evidence that Canadians do not always behave in ways that their basic values toward entrepreneurship and competition would suggest. For instance, in *Continental Divide*, Seymour Lipset notes that:

Americans have been more disposed to put their money in stocks. In 1981, such investment amounted to 0.9 percent of

GDP in the U.S. and 0.2 percent in Canada. As of 1986, 13 percent of adult Canadians were stockholders; the corresponding figure for Americans in 1985 was 20 percent.

The Science Council of Canada reports that Canadians save more than their neighbours to the south, that a greater "part of these savings goes into bank deposits, pensions, and life insurance." From 1980 to 1988, the household savings rate in Canada was more than twice that in the U.S. for all years but two, when it was almost at the same ratio (for example, in 1988 it was 8.9 to 4.9 percent).

22. On the other hand, every year since 1984 has seen the creation of more than 150 000 new businesses in Canada, most of them small businesses. On a per capita basis, this rate of business creation exceeds that in the U.S. Fifty percent of respondents in an Angus Reid Group Inc. poll (fall, 1986) who indicated they were not self-employed said they wished they were.
23. In Quebec, an entrepreneurial revolution in the business sector has occurred over the last 10 years. During this period, more new businesses started in Quebec than in any other province. There were more per capita small business people and more per capita business students. There was more investment in the manufacturing sector and, some academics claim, a higher level of confidence and entrepreneurial activity than in Ontario. In 1989, Quebec firms captured gold, silver and bronze in the entrepreneurship category of the Canada Awards for Business Excellence, and have won two trophies in this category each year since 1986.
24. Although there are signs that some Canadians are becoming more entrepreneurial, there may be an *attitude-behaviour gap* among Canadians with respect to certain aspects of entrepreneurship and competition. In this regard, Fletcher suggests that "the challenge facing Canada in competing in a global economy is not to change or reform our basic value orientations, but rather to devise new ways to draw upon the strengths of our existing culture and to enhance its strongest elements." Further research investigating the attitudes of Canadian business people and their relationship to business behaviour in particular circumstances would seem to be warranted. In any case, the 1990s promise many changes and corresponding challenges to Canadian business. Cultures may take a long time to develop, but some can adapt rapidly to change. Canadians in business must quickly adjust their behaviours about management of people and capital, S&T, trade, sustainable development and education if they hope to stay in business.

Management

25. New firms are often more oriented to change than established ones, because the entrepreneurial spirit that started them still predominates. But as they grow, all firms,

both new and established, need seasoned people who can foresee and manage the impact of change.

26. However mature and well operated they may be, all firms tend to become bureaucratic and resistant to change over time. This is especially true of organizations that are functionally designed and in which each functional manager is responsible for a narrow, often competing, bottom line.
27. In such firms, the introduction of a new technology or the pursuit of a new market opportunity can disrupt the objectives of functional managers. For instance, just-in-time (JIT) inventory systems supported by information technologies may represent a plus for a materials manager but a nightmare for a purchasing manager. A new market opportunity may further the marketing manager's objectives but create new concerns for the firm's accountants.
28. Successful firms are often resistant to change, confident in their ability to overcome any challenges they may face. Their confidence may be justified, but they should remain alert to possible changes in technology or the business environment that could arrest or slow their growth. They should also be receptive to new ideas that may improve quality or their market position.
29. To develop a culture that is alert to change, receptive to new ideas and devoted to quality in every aspect of the firm, managers could encourage creativity among all employees, and they could promote the view that the firm is an institution for learning new skills as well as making a profit. This means developing strategic plans that take into account technology and resource needs. It also means recognizing technological expertise, designing flexible work packages, developing innovative relationships with unions, and building organizational structures that encourage interactive and cooperative working relationships. Only in this way will managers create an environment in which entrepreneurship can flourish.
30. The NABST Private Sector Challenge Committee's report offers the following prescription to managers in the private sector for promoting an *innovation culture* in business:
 - encourage joint labour-management efforts to improve innovation and competitiveness;
 - organize the company to maximize potential for innovation;
 - encourage worker participation in major changes within the firm;
 - demand innovation from all members of the firm;

- ⊙ make innovation part of the company's spirit; and
 - use *technology champions*.
31. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has warned that unless firms develop organizational structures and working relationships to encourage entrepreneurship, they risk falling behind their competitors and losing their skilled work force to firms that have developed more creative environments. The chamber proposes four steps for firms to follow:
- ⊙ develop structures that afford managers and employees a great deal of flexibility;
 - ⊙ be flexible in the deployment of resources so that an entrepreneurial opportunity may be pursued;
 - ⊙ tolerate creative and original behaviour that may deviate from the norm; and
 - ⊙ invest in research and development (R&D) that will lead to improved products or processes.
32. If Canadian companies are considered by many to lack entrepreneurial values and skills, it is perhaps the managers who bear the brunt of this criticism. In most cases managers are the vanguard of change in a firm and so should be the main recipients of information about entrepreneurship in S&T, trade, sustainable development and education.

Science and Technology

33. Enormous changes have occurred in S&T over the last three decades. Dr. Bruce Merrifield, Assistant Secretary for Productivity in the Reagan Administration, suggested that 90 percent of what is known today has been learned in the last 30 years, and that new knowledge will double in the next 15 years. This quantum leap in knowledge, coupled with the ease of access to it afforded by new communications technologies, has led to a plethora of new technologies and other products, and to new competitors. Never before has science posed such daunting challenges to the business manager. It clearly has a key role to play in fostering innovation and supporting entrepreneurship.
34. No less than the arts, science contributes to the culture of a society by expanding that society's vision of the world and ultimately of itself.

35. Moreover, science can lead to direct economic returns. By helping to develop new technologies and encouraging the adoption of new and existing technologies by businesses, science makes a vital contribution to the competitiveness of Canadian industry.
36. Equally vital is the education and training needed to produce the scientists, engineers and technicians who may develop these technologies, or who may be employed by firms seeking to acquire and apply them.
37. The degree to which Canadians understand the economic value of S&T determines largely the extent to which:
- young Canadians will enter science-based professions;
 - managers will seek and acquire cost-cutting manufacturing technologies;
 - all members of the firm will apply their skills and energy in ways that maximize their own potential and that of newly introduced technologies; and
 - all Canadians will better understand the impact of technology on their lives.
38. Research findings in 1987 and 1988 by Decima Research Ltd. indicated that most Canadians are not preoccupied with S&T issues. For example:
- Canadians understand the importance of S&T to Canada in general, but not to their region or to themselves. Also, they do not see scientific and technological development as a key issue facing the nation.
 - There is not widespread support for increasing S&T in Canada. Reducing unemployment, cutting the deficit and increasing exports are considered more important.
 - Canadians do not appreciate the link between S&T and economic prosperity. This is especially true in non-manufacturing regions of the country.
 - S&T careers are not held in high esteem. Even educated Canadians do not rank scientific and technological careers highly. Girls and women show still less enthusiasm for such careers.
 - Only a minority of Canadians considers S&T to be a very important component of a young person's education.
 - A large number of Canadians still believe the country can rely for its continued prosperity on its natural resources alone.

39. A 1990 survey, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and ISTC, and called *Scientific Literacy: A Survey of Adult Canadians*, reveals that there is a low level of scientific literacy in Canada:
- some Canadians are ambivalent about the pace of scientific change;
 - some are uncertain whether society should depend more on science than on religious principles;
 - four in 10 surveyed Canadians agree that scientists are dangerous *because of their knowledge*;
 - of these, many are disturbed by what they perceive as the ability of scientists to manipulate nuclear energy and genes. Others blame scientists for chemical warfare or environmental problems; and
 - 63 percent of Canadians could not name a single Canadian scientist, and 54 percent could not name a single Canadian achievement in science.
40. A more science-oriented, technologically literate culture could be encouraged by both the public and private sectors. Educators could review their emphasis on and approach to science studies in order to increase the participation rate of students of both sexes at all levels. Industry could encourage training and retraining for managers and technicians in technical studies, and it could acknowledge the competitive edge science can give to business by improving the reward system for scientists, engineers and technicians.

Trade

41. The magnitude and nature of world trade have changed significantly in recent years, obliging Canadian business people to consider both new market opportunities and new competitors when drawing up their strategic plans.
42. Since the mid-1960s, and particularly since the signing of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Kennedy Round of tariff reductions, international trade has grown faster than the growth in world production. Trade patterns also have changed. Trade liberalization, through such instruments as the FTA, the GATT and Europe 1992 could open new markets for Canadian producers. At the same time, Canada's traditional share of foreign and domestic markets is being challenged both by producers in industrialized countries and emerging low-cost producers in lesser developed and developing countries.

43. Clearly, Canada is a trading nation with one-third of its GDP dependent upon trade. Exports as a percentage of Canadian real output have tended to be higher than in other major industrialized countries. Among major OECD countries, Canada has one of the highest export and import orientations.
44. Professor Litvak, at York University, believes the FTA has been an important psychological factor in helping Canadian business people to think *North American*: "American firms are still American companies, whereas the Canadian companies really have a North American focus."
45. Polling commissioned by External Affairs and International Trade Canada indicates that while the importance of trade to the economy is recognized widely, the business community traditionally lacks confidence about its prospects in markets outside North America.
46. *Directions 89/90*, a recent survey of Canadian high technology companies published by Ernst & Young, indicates that while 70 percent of the sampled firms were optimistic about the fortunes of the high technology industry under the FTA, only 42 percent believed they would benefit. Asked what actions they intend to take to benefit from the FTA, 28 percent responded "none," and 34 percent said "don't know." It would seem, therefore, that nearly 62 percent of the sample had not developed a proactive strategy for trading in the U.S. under the terms of the FTA. Most of these respondents were small and medium-sized firms.
47. Among firms planning to take active steps to secure benefits from free trade or minimize losses threatened by it (13 percent of the sample), the majority intended to increase operations in the U.S. and/or to increase exports to that country.
48. The emergence of new technologies also will challenge Canadians' outward orientation, but in a different sense. The expected life cycle of a new process or product has been reduced from an average 20-year period to one of five or six years' duration. As a result, firms developing these new technologies independently may be unable to recover their enormous R&D investment before development is replaced by a superior product. Only firms able to manage and respond quickly to this shifting marketplace by pooling resources, sharing risks and penetrating markets through collaborative efforts with other domestic or foreign firms are likely to thrive. So

important is this new way of doing business that, four years ago, the U.S. government amended its culturally sacred antitrust laws to permit R&D collaboration among its industrial giants.²

49. The *Directions 89/90* survey of high technology companies indicates that 34 percent of small responding firms, 56 percent of medium-sized responding firms and 61 percent of large responding firms had entered into a strategic alliance or partnership. Among the firms that have used alliances or partnerships in the past three years, 56 percent of them had used foreign partners only, and another 21 percent had used both foreign and domestic partners. Small firms had been most likely to use foreign partners only; medium-sized firms relied mostly on domestic firms; and large firms relied on both. Twenty-two percent of these alliances were international marketing joint ventures. Most firms (51 percent) entered into these partnerships to improve market share or sales, and 34 percent of responding firms that had entered a strategic partnership reported consequent improved sales and/or market share.
50. It is interesting to note how business people in other countries perceive Canadians' outward orientation, if only because it provides a sense of how successful Canadian traders are likely to be. The World Economic Forum keeps score of the competitiveness of 22 OECD countries and selected developing nations. Although the forum's measurements are not scientific, its subjective judgments are noteworthy. Among the 292 factors it assessed in 1988 to determine a country's relative competitiveness, it reported low rankings for Canada in the areas of outward orientation of the business community and innovativeness.
51. A 1987 report of the Conference Board of Canada, *Canadian Business Linkages with the Developing Countries, Volume 1, The Asian Experience*, notes that perceptions in India about Canadian traders are generally favourable. However, Indians frequently expressed the view that "Canadian businesses suffer from a vast information gap about India." It was felt that Canadians had a preoccupation with the U.S., an overdependence on the Canadian government to lead the way, and a tendency to think in terms of one-way traffic. "Canadians want to make Indians conform to North

² In a recently published study, Harvard business school professor Michael Porter has argued that strategic partnerships dampen the fierce domestic competition firms require to compete successfully in international markets. He cites the several internationally successful Japanese auto and semi-conductor companies, all of which compete with each other. While this view may be ideologically attractive, the fact is that these firms do cooperate in pre-competitive research, thereby pooling their creative forces and reducing some of their infrastructure costs. When an idea seems to have market potential, scientists working in these consortia retreat to their respective firms to develop a commercial product. Clearly, strategic partnerships must themselves be managed strategically.

American business practices...[and they] were not perceived as great doers or movers.... Canadians were often perceived as patronizing and suffering from neo-colonial prejudices." Canadian ignorance of India and Indians often resulted in non-credible offers being made by Canadian companies.

52. The same Conference Board report notes that Thai business people think their Canadian counterparts are naïve when doing business in Thailand, and lack aggressiveness and a sense of urgency. This naïvety stems from:
- ignorance of the characteristics of the Thai market;
 - a failure to recognize that Asian business relationships work better when based on personal contacts and references;
 - an expectation of quick returns; and
 - self-delusion in pretending that unofficial dealings are not part of doing business in Thailand.
53. In a summary report, *Building Partnerships for Tomorrow*, the Conference Board notes that Canadians have an excellent reputation abroad, but more as *nice guys* than effective business people. On the whole, Canadians were considered by business people in developing countries to lack a long-term commitment to markets, and as unwilling to take risks or engage in practices amenable to good business relationships.
54. Clearly, Canadian firms will need to be aggressive and outward-oriented if they are to capture new market opportunities. In an address to the School of Business Administration at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario (November 1988), David G. Vice, president of Northern Telecom Limited, offered the following advice:

For a company like my own, building a global position requires patience, and persistence. Entering new markets can be slow and costly. To begin with, there's no such thing as a coherent, homogeneous international market. The global market consists of a variety of national and regional economies, with their own cultures, their own politics, their own tastes and ways of doing business. In carrying out our global strategy, we have four guiding principles for penetrating key world markets:

- We make a long-term commitment to understand the politics, economics and culture of our trading partners. As quickly as possible, we employ talented nationals to run our operations in other countries.

- ▶ We make a commitment to build trust in our technological leadership. We work closely with customers and partners to share information and keep them abreast of technological trends and advances.
- ▶ Our marketing strategy is selective. We choose carefully international ventures. We try to be sensitive to the needs and wants of our customers for local production facilities, licensing our technology, distribution agreements, or other ways of doing business.
- ▶ We use strategic alliances as a way of penetrating key markets and building competitive advantage. Global competition requires global partners.

Sustainable Development

55. Along with rapidly changing technology and liberalized trade, the need to protect the environment could change the way business is done in Canada.
56. Sustainable development has been defined as pursuing economic activity in ways that reduce its impact on the environment for future generations. Canadians' growing concern for the environment is evident in both opinion polls and consumer preferences. These preferences and the likelihood of increasingly restrictive environmental protection regulations, are affecting boardroom decisions (and hence, business culture), as business recognizes that its policies and products must be in fact, as well as being perceived to be, environmentally sound.
57. As discussed earlier, Canada's economy has been linked traditionally to the exploitation of natural resources. The perception that Canada's resource wealth is unlimited and largely untapped has long existed and still exists today.
58. When the World Commission on Environment and Development published *Our Common Future* in April 1987, politicians and the public realized that renewable resources were not being renewed at rates that would meet the demands of future generations; that non-renewable resources, especially energy resources, were being depleted at rates that were overrunning the technological and economic ability to find substitutes; and that this mismanagement of resources had led to serious environmental problems that were threatening the persistence of life on the planet. The public and politicians realized that the earth is a closed system and that pollutants did not simply disappear into the sea. Concern for the environment has become linked to a concern for health. Unlike the aesthetic arguments of the counter-culture, the arguments for sustainable development have not been ignored by politicians or government.

59. Some business leaders have begun to realize that this widespread concern for the environment affects their decisions. Adam Zimmerman, chairman of Noranda Forest Inc., has indicated that not only must his projects be environmentally sound, but also they must be seen to be environmentally sound. Other business leaders, like David Nichols, chairman of Loblaw Companies Limited, have realized that concern for the environment is sufficiently widespread and held deeply to present a plausible marketing opportunity. The so-called *greenness* of the product, its packaging and its manufacturing process are becoming important factors in consumers' buying decisions. *Greenness* is another means by which manufacturers can differentiate their products from those of their competitors.
60. A survey conducted by the Grocery Products Manufacturers of Canada found that:
- one-quarter of responding shoppers said they would go out of their way to do things that are good for the environment;
 - one-half of responding shoppers would return containers to the store after use;
 - almost seven in 10 respondents were ready to sort recyclable material for curbside pick-up;
 - 40 percent would be willing to switch to products using biodegradable packaging;
 - 31 percent said they would supply their own bags and containers when shopping; and
 - eight out of 10 respondents said they would consider paying more to buy environmentally safe goods, and 32 percent said they were definitely willing to pay more.
61. In the last week of March 1990, Pampers accounted for 19 percent of sales at Loblaw's Supermarkets Limited, while green diapers came a close second at 14 percent — ahead of other brand-name disposable diapers. In view of the product differentiation and associated potent advertising extant in this market, the success of the green diapers over a such a short period is remarkable.
62. According to Environics Research Group Ltd., preference for green products is much stronger in Canada than in other nations, particularly the U.S. Canadian manufacturers have an opportunity to create an association with *greenness* that could become an internationally recognized characteristic of Canadian products. Indeed, criteria have been sanctioned by the Canadian Standards Association for the Environmental Choice Program, run by Environment Canada, for affixing *environmental choice* labels to qualifying products. There is money to be made in

environmental advertising, environmental advising and producing or using new, environmentally sound products and processes. (In 1990 the Canada Awards for Business Excellence gave an award to a Canadian business for outstanding achievement in the development of environmentally friendly products.)

63. At the same time, many businesses that do pollute must compete in volatile, price-competitive world markets. While they may want to behave responsibly, they may be compelled to act otherwise in the absence of a worldwide agreement that resources should be priced to reflect their environmental costs or in the absence of restrictive government regulations. The challenge for governments and business will be to recognize these realities and arrive at a balanced timetable for implementing solutions that are in line with the positions of all trading partners. Since provincial governments can impose environmental regulations, this task becomes even more complicated in the Canadian context.
64. If they are willing and able to improve their environmental record, before governments are forced to impose a costly regulatory framework, Canadian firms could benefit significantly. This would be so not simply because both government and industry would have avoided the lose/lose impact of regulations, but because environmentally safe processes may lead, in the medium to long term, to greater efficiencies. Indeed, green processes aim naturally for a more efficient use of supply, resulting in cost reductions, the recycling of waste products and the development of new products. All of this could improve a firm's competitiveness.
65. Short of implementing environmental protection regulations, governments should find ways of increasing firms' awareness of the potential benefits to corporate image, cost savings and product development that can result from environmentally friendly marketing and manufacturing programs. At the same time, the public could be made aware of the costs many industries incur as a result of adopting environmentally friendly production techniques. They would then better appreciate that if industry moves too quickly to become environmentally sound, many would become uncompetitive and would fail. At the very least, thousands of people would lose their jobs.

Education and Training

Education

66. Education and training systems are important conduits of culture. Most Canadians spend a great deal of time in school — impressionable time when they begin to form and reform their views of the world and their place in it.

67. It is unclear whether values, beliefs and attitudes are as influenced by the education system as by family, peers and other institutions. However, it is known that educational institutions are rarely leaders in changing values and attitudes. Rather, they tend to reflect prevailing community values, conveyed through biases extant in the curriculum and in how subjects are taught. This means they also tend to communicate certain attitudes about entrepreneurship, business or S&T that could support or detract from the future competitiveness of this country.
68. As noted earlier, many Canadians do not always have positive attitudes about S&T, but attitudes about entrepreneurship may be improving. Declining enrolment rates in science courses, and improving enrolment in business courses suggest that these attitudes may be formed during school years. It could be argued that these enrolment rates indicate attitudes that are simply a reflection of community values; and are therefore in keeping with the *mirroring* role of the educational systems.
69. The propriety of using the public education system as a vehicle for promoting culture, any kind of culture, is debatable. Some view the educational systems as legitimate agents for promoting attitudinal change. For instance, the OECD found that education systems among member states do not foster the development of entrepreneurial competence — that is, imagination, initiative, judgment, determination and organizing abilities to convert ideas into action. This circumstance, the report concluded, should be changed.
70. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce argues that the education system does influence the career aspirations of young Canadians. Since Canada's professional composition has a direct effect on our competitiveness, the transformation of our economy is increasingly being distorted by the shortcomings of our education system, according to the chamber.
71. As noted earlier, science literacy is extremely important in today's competitive environment. There is reason to lament the low levels of science literacy among adult Canadians, especially in view of the changing occupational composition of the Canadian job market. Clearly, jobs of the future will entail a higher level of technological understanding and a greater calibre of entrepreneurial competence than those for which the educational systems were preparing youth in the past.
72. The U.S. Department of Education has stated that many of America's public school graduates do not lack basic literacy or numeracy skills; they lack the ability to think critically and to apply their knowledge to new situations.
73. Academics, like Russell Knight, professor of business administration at the University of Western Ontario, have even suggested that the education system erodes the entrepreneurial spirit with which many individuals are born.

74. Perhaps an education system that promoted entrepreneurial behaviour would be a hidden competitive advantage for Canada. All of these opinions are instructive but little empirical data exists to indicate whether students are acquiring at school the skills and attitudes needed to participate in a competitive global economy or what kind of business attitudes are fostered by the school system. These issues need to be studied further.

Training

75. As noted earlier, industry in Canada has invested very little in training its work force compared with major trading partners. This may be due, in part, to the large number of small firms in Canada, the high mobility of Canadian workers, and the preponderance of resource-based industries that have not adopted new manufacturing technologies rapidly enough and therefore have experienced little demand for new skills.
76. According to Decima's December 1988 Quarterly Report, more than half the Canadian work force (53 percent) would trade wage gains for increased access to training. Clearly, many Canadians realize where their future lies, even if their employers do not.
77. The Advisory Council on Adjustment believes that the private sector must make a commitment now to training and retraining employees to absorb the skills they will need in order to master new process technologies.
78. If Canadians are to develop the sophisticated skills needed to participate in the global trading environment, industry could find new ways to provide workers with ongoing opportunities to learn new skills. Governments could encourage the development of a *training culture* in industry.
79. Moreover, this training culture could extend to a stronger commitment by the business community to the university and school system. There are several successful examples of mutually beneficial business-education relationships — from *adopt-a-school* programs to active involvement by businesses in the development of education policy and curricula.

Business-Government Relations

80. The NABST Private Sector Challenge Committee has stated that the private sector must lead Canada in the effort to create a more competitive Canadian industry: "While governments and the educational community can help create a competitive environment, only the private sector can innovate and compete in world markets."

81. Through their policies and programs, governments may influence the formation and structure of a culture. But they would be misguided to try to impose a culture. The role of the federal government is to encourage entrepreneurial attitudes by promoting an awareness of the positive returns these attitudes can deliver, by creating a supportive business climate and by minimizing its own interventions in the marketplace.
82. As described earlier, governments, historically, have influenced the development of Canadian business and the business culture. Canadian industry still bears the marks of federal government interventions into the nation's boardrooms and factories during the Second World War. By seeking assured markets for Canadian wartime products, threatened by American suppliers, the Canadian government started a long-term procurement relationship with Canadian business. Most countries have sought to develop strong sectors through targeted public sector procurement programs. Canada would have missed opportunities if, for ideological reasons only, it had decided not to do the same. Indeed, important industries — telecommunications and nuclear — were developed in Canada in this way. But if procurement programs are implemented in a way that fosters a dependence upon a public sector market, they discourage a global market-oriented approach to business development and ultimately do business a disservice.
83. In the ensuing decades, governments' incursions into the business arena intensified. Crown corporations, competing directly with private interests, were set up and some Canadian and foreign multinationals were nationalized in order to protect or advance the *public good*. Again, these corporations were erected during a period when many nations were using this business construct as a development tool. Canada would have been remiss if it had not jumped on the bandwagon. With the comfort of government backing, these firms may have been more prepared to behave in unviable ways to improve their competitive position. For instance, a publicly owned corporation may be better positioned to weather a predatory pricing strategy to gain market share.
84. Since 1984, the federal government has sought to change this relationship with a policy agenda that has included a commitment to continuing fiscal restraint and economic initiatives to facilitate competitive decision making by the private sector. The aim has been to make the private sector the primary engine of growth. This policy agenda has:
- sought to control public debt by controlling spending;
 - lessened government's role in the economy by deregulating key sectors through, for instance, revisions to the *Patent Act*, and by selectively privatizing government assets and Crown corporations;

- improved Canada's access to foreign markets, particularly through the FTA; and
 - stimulated savings and investment by improving the overall fairness of the tax system through a program of tax reform.
85. Within this policy context, the Government of Canada created ISTC to promote the long-term domestic and international competitiveness of Canadian industry and to promote scientific excellence. Unlike its predecessors — the Ministry of State for Science and Technology (MOSST) and the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion (DRIE) — ISTC does not deliver programs for general-purpose grants and contributions. Nor does it provide ad hoc assistance to individual firms. These programs were expensive. Moreover, they often got fledgling firms off on the wrong foot by cultivating a dependence on governments. Or they merely prolonged the death throes of uncompetitive firms or industries.
86. Through an integrated program of advocacy, policy development and services to business, ISTC is focusing on five critical ways to encourage competitiveness in Canadian firms. These include:
- improving market penetration;
 - developing scientific and technological excellence;
 - strengthening the human resource base;
 - promoting a positive investment climate; and
 - promoting entrepreneurship.
87. Within this framework, ISTC delivers a number of programs and services to make Canadians better aware of the importance of an entrepreneurial, innovative culture in management and S&T.
- The National Policy on Entrepreneurship, announced in 1988, includes several initiatives designed to promote entrepreneurship and its benefits among Canadians. By working with selected non-profit organizations, the Entrepreneurship Awareness Program, for instance, has effectively, and at little cost, communicated the *entrepreneurship* message to selected groups. Other mechanisms under the policy include: the Entrepreneurship Awareness Program, the National Forum on Entrepreneurship, the National Entrepreneurship Development Institute and an annual report on the state of small business in Canada. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency also recently launched an entrepreneurship awareness campaign.

- The Canada Awards for Business Excellence program provides awards for outstanding business achievement in areas of business performance that are key to Canada's international competitiveness. Awards are given in eight categories: entrepreneurship, innovation, invention, industrial design, total quality, marketing, environment and small business. These awards, and others like it, promote superior business managers as role models for all Canadians. Applicants are adjudicated by independent panels of private sector experts and senior business executives. More than 200 gold, silver and bronze medals have been awarded since the program began in 1984, as well as a similar number of certificates of merit. The concept has been received positively by business. Between 1984 and 1989, applications under the program increased by 100 percent. Other awards programs of the federal government include: the Environmental Achievement Awards, given by Environment Canada; the Canada Export Awards, given by External Affairs and International Trade Canada; and the Canada Post Corporation's Supplier Awards. Provincial governments have developed awards programs of their own, notably Quebec's Mercuriades Awards.
 - The S&T Public Awareness Campaign and the Science Culture Canada program seek to raise public awareness of the importance of scientific and technological development to the economic well-being and quality of life of Canadians. The short- and long-term objectives of these programs include persuading more Canadians to consider careers and businesses in S&T. Although the campaign's primary target is youth, it also includes a number of activities aimed at the general public, the most notable being the annual National Science and Technology Week, first held in October 1990.
88. In the last decade, a number of mechanisms have been developed to allow business and the federal government to exchange information and advice and to simply get to know each other better. A plethora of industry associations, lobby groups and federal-government relations executives have emerged and matured, offering the Government of Canada and the private sector advice and expertise on a variety of business subjects. The Canadian government's approach to industry also has matured as a number of advisory relationships with companies like IBM have developed. In addition, ISTC participates in a successful Executive Exchange Program with industry and maintains an ongoing dialogue with its clients.
89. The federal government has created several mechanisms for discussing specific issues with business and the larger community, including the Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade (SAGITs) to discuss trade issues, NABST to discuss S&T issues, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy to discuss sustainable development issues, and the National and Provincial Forums on Entrepreneurship in Canada to discuss entrepreneurship and small business issues.

90. Unions have strong views about changing work patterns and the implementation of technology. As discussed above, managers will have to develop innovative relationships with unions to ensure that they realize the benefits that employees can derive from changes in the workplace. Although the federal government interacts with unions through mechanisms like the SAGITs, the Canada Awards for Business Excellence and NABST, there is much room for improvement in the ongoing dialogue between the federal government and unions.
91. The NABST Private Sector Challenge Committee, in its report, *Keeping Canada Competitive: The Innovation Imperative*, recommends that business and labour leaders be mobilized to lead the private sector to respond to the challenges facing them in the coming decades. This event would introduce an important and positive new dimension to business-government relations in Canada.

Conclusions

92. Attitudes and, therefore, cultures always are shifting, often in imperceptible ways. One cannot conclude, however, that the not-so-obvious is unimportant. Changing attitudes about competitiveness and entrepreneurship could mean the difference between the success and failure of Canadian business people in the changing world marketplace. Professor Fletcher has suggested that "the challenge facing Canada in competing in a global economy is not to change or reform our basic value orientations, but rather to devise new ways to draw upon the strengths of our existing culture and to enhance its strongest elements." This is a very different starting point from that suggested by Lipset's analysis of Canadians' business culture. The logical conclusion drawn from Fletcher's analysis might be that Canadians need strong central government and business leadership to develop and implement a business framework, and institutional settings that would harvest their competitive spirit. From Lipset's point-of-view, Canadians may need a fundamental reorientation of values if they hope to compete internationally.
93. It would be unwise simply to pick the most comfortable of these two scenarios. The mere possibility of two points of view on this subject, however, suggests that we should continue to study Canada's business culture and to remain vigilant to any important changes in it.

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Fax: (416) 973-8714

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X1A 2R3
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HEADQUARTERS**ISTC**

1st Floor, East Tower
235 Queen Street
OTTAWA, Ont.
K1A 0H5
Tel.: (613) 952-ISTC
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