



CONFERENCE ON EMPOWERING HI-TECH SMEs TO STRENGTHEN KBE IN CANADA

1 Objective

We plan to have a Conference on May 22 and 23, 2018 with the objective of creating an essential dialogue between the Hi-Tech SMEs on one hand and the Politicians and Bureaucrats on the other to discuss and recommend to the Government of Canada steps required to empower hi-tech SMEs so that we can strengthen our Knowledge-based Economy for a more prosperous Canada.

We need to have multiple meetings between Hi-Tech SME Conference organizers and the Government Bureaucrats and Politicians to discuss all the points contained in the complementary document: "Ingredients Required to Empower Hi-Tech SMEs to strengthen our Knowledge-Based Economy" and come to some agreements.

2 Background

The Canadian economy is highly resource-based. We are highly vulnerable to resource pricing as the current oil price dip has shown. In order to take our country to a higher plateau, we need to leverage our richness in resources and strong educational system to create a Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) for unleashing our great potential and securing our future. In the Budget 2017, the Canadian Government announced an investment of \$800 Million in the next 4 years in innovation which is a substantial investment. **However, we believe that in order to make the best use of this investment, i.e. to maximize the Return on this Investment (ROI), we must first strengthen our hi-tech Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which are currently not strong enough to make the best use of this investment.**

The resource Sector itself is a great marketplace opportunity for SMEs to design, develop and sell innovative products. The KBE will also have a great impact on our Resource-Based Economy in many different ways and create many additional high quality jobs. Currently, we export our raw resources, and in many cases reimport finished products, missing out on an opportunity to create many manufacturing jobs. KBE will help in optimizing the use of technology and labor to process many of these raw materials here in Canada.

3 Introduction

With the idea of strengthening/empowering hi-tech SMEs, hi-tech organizations IITAC, CATA and the Carleton University have joined hands to organize a conference in May 2018 in Ottawa.

In order to maximize benefit of this Conference we have planned two workshops to discuss the topics of the Conference listed in section 4. These workshops are planned to be held as follows:

Workshop 1 to be held on October 25, 2017 covering topics a) and b) of the following section.

Workshop 2 to be held on November 29, 2017 covering topics c) and d) of the following section.

4 Ingredients to Strengthen SMEs

In order to strengthen SMEs, we believe that the following ingredients are necessary:

- a) Operational Improvements within the Government
- b) Hi-Tech SME Procurement processes
- c) Government Assistance Programs & Venture Capital
- d) International Market access and sales closure

4.1 Operational Improvements within the Government

This part will deal with departmental operations and potential improvements to help hi-tech SMEs to grow e.g., less in house development more contracting out, more collaboration between Government Departments and hi-tech SMEs, more efficient setup within the Government departments etc. It will result in recommendations about what improvements are required to help develop hi-tech SMEs.

4.2 Procurement Issues

This part of the conference will deal with Procurement issues which need government attention. Many of these are related to internal operations of the government which minimize contracting opportunities, many opportunities come only in the form of “body-shopping” and that also only in Ottawa starving companies in the rest of Canada. “Body-shopping” does not create any IP - the bloodline of growth - for companies to leverage. Other examples include requirement for more Canadian content, PSPC and Departments to have more vendor-friendly attitude, realistic requirements for insurances, more attention for commercialization possibilities, etc.

4.3 Innovation: Government Assistance Programs and Venture Capital

We will cover the Government Assistance Programs and the view of hi-tech SMEs how to make them more effective with special attention to commercialization. Despite an attempt to streamline some of these programs after the Jenkins Commission’s Report, still the landscape is too complex requiring outside consultants who siphon off considerable part of this assistance fund resulting in reduced benefits to hi-tech SMEs. Some programs such as SR&ED, if reorganized can produce much bigger benefits than they do today. The discussions will cover Programs such as SR&ED, IRAP, NSERC, etc. It will also cover the newly announced Venture Capital Program.

Finally, we will also discuss what KBE means and what other steps are required to strengthen it e.g. educations system, immigration policy, collaboration between, public, private and university sectors, etc.

4.4 International Market access and sales closure

This Panel will cover access to global markets and how do we ensure that Canadian high-tech SMEs can compete/collaborate with companies from around the world and do business in large markets.

5 Value Proposition

5.1 Value Proposition for all Attendees

A number of hi-tech SMEs have been complaining about Government policies which hinder their progress. Some organizations representing hi-tech SMEs visit the Hill to present their point of view to the politicians on the matters discussed in the previous section.

This Conference has been designed specifically to offer an opportunity to all attendees to present their views during the Panel Discussions and Q&A sessions. We expect high profile politicians and bureaucrats to attend these sessions to get the industry feedback. Implementation of the ideas to be presented and discussed in this Conference will improve Government as a Marketplace for the growth of hi-tech SMEs resulting in high quality jobs and prosperity in Canada.

5.2 Value Proposition to Industry:

In summary, this Conference will provide attendees with an opportunity to learn and present their opinion on various matters such as:

1. What changes are needed in the operation of the Government Departments for helping industry to generate more IP and growth through more contracting opportunities
2. How more targeted investment will create more wealth and prosperity in Canada
3. How we can help the government to formulate future innovation agenda to help design resources that can be more easily accessed and that are relevant to business growth.

The conference will also provide an opportunity to:

- a) Provide networking opportunities with government and private sector participants.
- b) Meet with peers and share best practices and explore opportunities for potential partnerships and allies to help accelerate the growth of your business
- c) Gain exposure for your products and services, as a part of advancing your sales funnel.

5.3 Value Proposition for Government

In order to properly implement the ideas presented in the Budget 2017, Government of Canada (**GOC**) needs industry feedback. This Conference will provide a great opportunity to both politicians and bureaucrats to get firsthand feedback from industry which will be much harder and much more expensive to get through any other means.

In order to get the most benefit out of this Conference, the GOC will have to dedicate its resources including the time of Ministers, MPs and bureaucrats. ***GOC must also provide funding for holding this event which will provide them great opportunity to interact with industry leaders to fine tune their programs and define more details to achieve optimum results.***

6 Consultations before the Conference

Unlike other conferences in which presentations are made for knowledge sharing, this one is for achieving change in business environment for Hi-Tech SMEs in Canada.

There are four issues to be discussed: (1) Improvement in Government dealings with Hi-Tech SMEs, (2) Improvement in Procurement Strategy (3) Government Assistance Programs for Innovation including SBIR. (4) Venture Capital.

We will organize meetings and workshops to discuss these items and come to some agreements and conclusions with the government. This activity will then lead to the two day Conference in mid-May, 2018.

7 Location

We are hoping to use the newly developed Infinity Convention Centre (please visit <https://infinityconventioncentre.com/>) just off Hunt Club Road which has two hotels (Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn) also owned by the same group right beside it with a lot of parking spaces. There are also other hotels in the near vicinity. It is also quite close to the Ottawa Airport and not too far from downtown Ottawa and the Carleton University.

Other alternative is to have smaller workshops to discuss each of the major points and then hold the Conference and Banquet.



8 When?

It is proposed that the Conference be held on May 22 and 23, 2018.

9 Invitees

9.1 Speakers:

We need to invite Ministers concerned with related areas. In addition, we plan to invite some speakers of high caliber from Private and Public Organizations and Universities who can do justice to the topics of this Conference. For example, for the third topic (Government Assistance) we should try to get either Tom Jenkins or Arvind Gupta, for export assistance we should invite EDC and BDC people, etc. For other topics, carefully selected leaders of hi-tech SMEs must be invited who can present useful views for strengthening of hi-tech SMEs. With strong connections of the sponsoring organizations, we should be able to get right people.

9.2 Panelists

We are seeking the Panelists who are experts in each of the areas we are covering and are also very good communicators. The Moderators for each panel have to be able to control the discussion

to maximize the input and coverage of the objective of each panel. Some Panelists should be from the STI Committee of the Parliament also called INDU.

9.3 Attendees

We will try to get 500 attendees from all hi-tech SMEs from all across Canada. We will have lots of attendees from the Government side – both politicians and Bureaucrats from all concerned departments. This will be a rare opportunity to exchange ideas for the betterment of our country.

10 Program

10.1 Conference Program

A Draft Program is presented in the following pages which needs to be reviewed by IITAC, CATA and Carleton University before it is accepted as an outline of the Program. After that the details will be worked out.

10.2 Gala Evening

We plan to have a gala evening on the first day and are trying our best to get the Prime Minister to show that he really supports the development of the new economy. We have met him many times during the period 2010-2015 when he was in opposition and he always supported these ideas and have also got his government to put Innovation strongly on his government's agenda through the latest budget.

11 Attendance Fee

We need to discuss what the appropriate registration fee is for this Conference.

12 Budget and Sponsors

We are working out a Budget and are looking for sponsors at various levels of sponsorships. Because the big beneficiary of this Conference will be the Government of Canada which will have the benefit of advice of so many high class luminaries to set its innovation agenda, we will approach the Government of Canada for strong financial support. In addition, sponsors from private industry will also be sought.

13 Publicity

Following are the pre-requisites for starting the publicity:

- a) This document to be basically accepted by the three organizations (IITAC, CATA and the Carleton University) involved in this Conference,
- b) Confirmation of the participation of Ministers and bureaucrats and support of the Government

All three of the above-mentioned organizations will use their resources for publicity.

We will have a small committee to coordinate this publicity through various channels.

We plan to invite media to cover this landmark conference in as much detail as possible.

14 Organizing Committee

We are constituting an Organization Committee to deal with different aspects of organization.

PROGRAM PROPOSAL

(May 22 and 23, 2018)

Opening Session First Day

Morning Session: **Plenary Session 1:** Optimization of Government Operations and Procurement

Up to 4 presentations including keynote by the Minister of ISED (to be confirmed) and the Minister of PSPC (to be confirmed).

Panel Discussion on the above topics.

Afternoon Session: **Plenary Session 2:** Global Markets and assistance to hi-tech SMEs to be successful in these markets

Up to 3 speeches including that of the Minister of International Trade (to be confirmed)

Panel Discussion on the above topics. Also involve EDC and BDC

Evening: 18:30 PM to 10:00 PM Gala and keynote speech by the Prime Minister (to be confirmed).

Day Two Program

Morning Session **Plenary Session 3: Innovation Agenda and Assistance Programs**

Up to 3 presentations including keynote by Minister of S&T (to be confirmed)

Panel Discussion on the above topics.

Afternoon Session: **Plenary Session 4:** Knowledge-Based Economy

Up to 3 speeches of experts and Minister of SMEs

Panel Discussion on the above topics.