

Business

New immigrants boost the national economy

The Canadian government has decided to increase the annual flow of immigrants to 250,000 by 1992 - 50,000 more than in 1990. And that decision has made some Canadians uneasy.

"Many people fear new arrivals will take existing jobs, or tax the social system by collecting welfare and unemployment insurance benefits," says Carol Tennessy, Director, Special Projects at the Federal Business Development Bank (FBDB). "But that just is not true."

Research gathered by the FBDB indicates that Canada's thriving ethnocultural population is responsible for half of all small businesses in Canada and represents \$60 billion to the nation's economy.

Most new arrivals become productive members of Canadian society who boost the economy. Many create jobs not only for themselves, but for other Canadians.

They may need help initially, however. "Starting a business is not easy for anyone," says Tennessy. "For people who are less familiar with Canada's official languages, culture and business practices, the challenges are even greater."

As a Crown corporation that helps Canadians launch and manage small and medium-sized

businesses, the FBDB recognizes the great potential of ethnocultural entrepreneurs. The Bank has also learned about some of the difficulties from business people such as Mike Tang of Toronto.

In 1979, Tang launched Tang's Trading Company, which distributes dried and packaged goods from the Orient to grocery stores across Canada. The \$1-million business employs four people.

Tang was born in China, grew up in Taiwan, and studied in the United States before arriving in Canada in 1973. He says Canada offers immigrants abundant opportunity to succeed as entrepreneurs, but they must understand the fundamental difference between Canada and most other countries: There just aren't as many people here.

"In Hong Kong, Japan or Taiwan, you can open a business on any corner and it will be busy because of the tremendous foot traffic. Here, location is very important. Yet, people start a business without research and then don't understand why their store isn't busy."

Tang works as a part-time counsellor with the Bank's CASE (Counselling Assistance to Small Enterprises) program so that he

can share his entrepreneurial experience with people just starting out. He is also a member of the FBDB's ethnocultural advisory committee in Toronto.

The FBDB has set up eight regional advisory committees across Canada as part of its program for ethnocultural entrepreneurs.

The multicultural business people who have volunteered their time to these committees are helping the FBDB to identify the unique challenges faced by new Canadians as entrepreneurs. The FBDB has used the information from these committees to devise workshops, seminars, information kits and other services that are tailored specifically to the needs of ethnocultural entrepreneurs.

One of the outcomes of the program is the FBDB's newest entrepreneurial guide. Starting a Business in Canada: A Guide for New Canadians covers the basics that any new entrepreneur needs to know, including business and financial planning. It also contains information that new Canadians may not know, such as the necessity of complying with Canada's labour and taxation laws.

The guide's many references help new Canadians to contact

the government agencies and ethnocultural business associations that may be able to help them with their new venture.

For more information about the FBDB's ethnocultural program or for a free copy of the guide, call 1-800-361-2126.

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Business of the Year

Chosen as the 1990 'Business of the Year' by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, was Armstrong Insurance of Georgetown, owned by Paul Armstrong (centre). He credits a lot of the business's success to his staff which includes: (middle row, left to right)

Wendy McGowan, Shelley Wheeler, Janet Armstrong, Cindy Kallmeyer and (back row, left to right) Joan Hewitt, Shelley Thorne, Joan Anderson and Mandy Armstrong-Rogers. (Herald photo)

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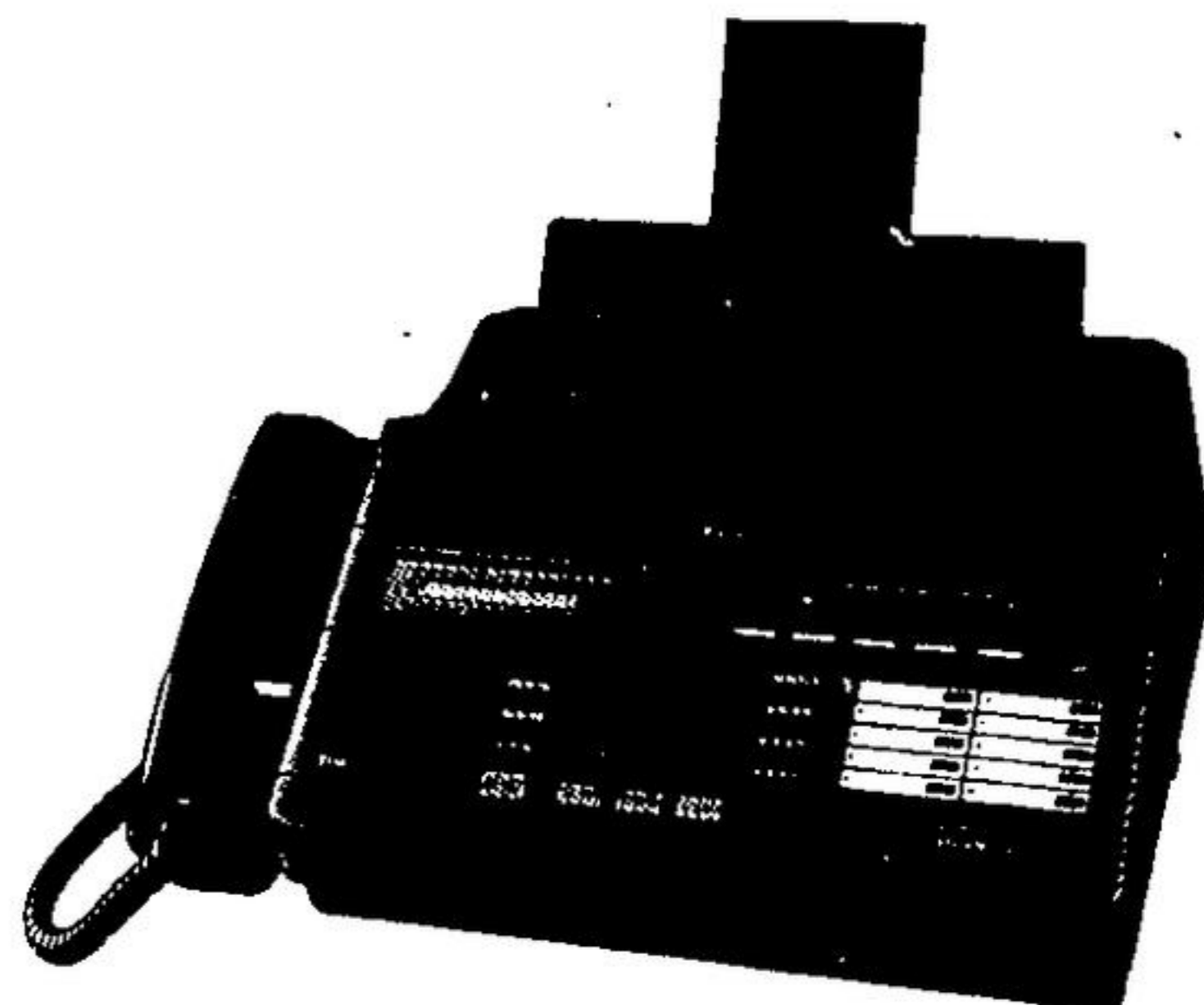
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