

The Canadian Embassy is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. except Wednesdays when the hours are 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The Embassy is not open Saturdays. Embassy phone numbers are 2-6421, 2-6422 and 2-6423. The numbers 2-6422 and 2-6423 are used after office hours and are answered on a 24-hour basis.

The Business Interview

Cuban purchasing officials prefer to do business with people they trust, and Canadians generally share with Cubans a friendly, open and informal approach.

Your business visit to Cuba may well be your hosts' first opportunity to meet you. You will find yourself made most welcome during your stay. You may receive invitations to dinner and nightclubs, and it is standard practice to reciprocate by arranging a lunch or dinner for your hosts during your stay. This should be done a day or so in advance. A high-pressure sales approach is not necessary. You should, however, reinforce your company's image by discussing its product range, new product development, etc. Cubans are keen to buy the latest technological innovations and are well-disposed to North American technology.

If you speak any Spanish, use it at every opportunity. Interpreters will be available for the more detailed discussions that may ensue. Speak slowly to allow the interpreter ample opportunity to translate, so that the Cuban officials will have full understanding of the points you are making. As the interview progresses you should emphasize, by repeating, the important points made earlier in the interview in order that they may be understood in context. At the end of the interview, summarize in writing the agreed-on points requiring action or further discussion. As in any market, visual aids are effective — however, equipment may not be readily available and you should make your needs known to your hosts before leaving Canada.

Do not be dismayed if you receive no immediate feedback. The information you provide during your visit will be translated and circulated to end users for comments and eventual approval. You will be able to judge the results of your visit either at a round-up session at the close of your business visit, or upon returning to Canada in follow-up discussions with the empresa's representative at Galax Inc. and/or the Cuban Trade Commission in Montreal. Decision-making in Cuba proceeds at its own pace and there is little to be gained by pressing for instant decisions. Remember that the empresa often has to discuss the contract and