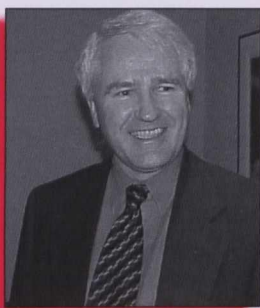


Investment Partnerships Canada: Working with posts

An Interview with Alan Virtue



Alan Virtue is a trade commissioner currently serving as Director General on a secondment to Investment Partnerships Canada (IPC).

WHAT IS IPC, AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

IPC was formed by Industry Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to act as a focal point for foreign investment support in Canada. It is a proactive organization that targets potential corporate investors in specific markets using information generated by posts, sector groups, and databases.

IPC works closely with the provinces and other federal government departments to attract and support foreign investment. One of our key priorities is to strengthen the links to our partners.

HOW DOES IPC WORK WITH POSTS?

IPC offers services to posts that help eliminate the groundwork involved in ferreting out potential investors. Before making a cold call to a prospective corporate investor, posts can contact IPC for information on the company's international position and how best to approach them. We provide pre-corporate liaison and call briefs, a comprehensive database search and an overview of the corporation. We also maintain a Web site (www.investin-canada.com) where officers can refer to case studies and use them as templates. Once the post has scouted out the prospective investor, IPC keeps the ball rolling by assisting the company seeking to invest in Canada.

For posts, the benefits of using IPC are time saved and more opportunities to be proactive.

WHAT IS IPC'S DEPUTY MINISTERS' PROGRAM?

This is a group of seven deputy ministers working specific areas and sectors. They meet with potential investors identified by the posts in an effort to attract investment. While the Deputy Ministers' Program is well ensconced, it needs to be more strategic. This is another one of our priorities.

WHAT IS IPC DOING TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN CANADA?

We assist posts and consult with sector groups to identify potential investors. We work with posts to facilitate meetings between prospective investors and our Deputy Ministers. We have also embarked on a branding pilot. Both IPC and posts have realized the need to change how Canada is perceived abroad. For instance, a survey of New Yorkers rated Canada as friendly and kind, but not particularly competitive or dynamic. We don't need to shed the friendly image, but we do need to pump up the other image.

The branding pilot is a way to help us target our marketing and communications strategies. The exercise compares sectors in the US to determine who the investment decision-makers are, and who and what influences them. When people think about investing in North America, they're thinking about the US, not Canada. We need to give them reasons to think about Canada as a good place to invest.