

Market Access

Sometimes, even a perfect match between a Canadian product or service and a Mexican need is not enough to ensure success. Mexico has only recently emerged from decades of protectionism, and barriers to both exports and investment remain. Although the main obstacles have been eliminated or reduced under the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), eliminating trade impediments for specific products and services requires constant vigilance and advocacy by the Trade Commissioner Service and trade policy officials.

The advocacy role of Canadian officials in Mexico also extends to logistical issues such as facilitating the flow of goods across the Mexico-U.S. border. Most Canadian goods presently enter Mexico at Laredo, Texas, and bottlenecks at that location have been an impediment for some exporters. The monitoring of border issues is just one of the responsibilities of the Canadian Consulate in Monterrey.

Interaction between Canadian business and Canadian officials in Mexico is essential to ensure that these efforts are closely targeted to real problems experienced in the marketplace. Trade commissioners are available to troubleshoot specific problems faced by individual companies.

Outreach and Awareness

One obstacle to expanded Canadian trade with Mexico is a lack of awareness of Mexican opportunities. Another is a lack of familiarity with Mexican business culture and practices. The Trade Commissioner Service works with the other members of Team Canada to disseminate information in both of these areas. The Export *i* Mexican Knowledge Base is the centerpiece of this effort. This system includes not only market information, but also business guides covering a wide range of marketing, financing and logistical issues, with special emphasis on the cultural dimension of doing business in Mexico. Continuous updating is a key feature of the Knowledge Base, and our Action Plan also includes systematic efforts to publicize its availability.

Export preparation is the other major part of the outreach component. Practical training tools are developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and provided to members of Team Canada as well as some business organizations. Although we do not deliver training directly; training material covering several aspects of entry into Mexican markets is available:

- Understanding Mexican Business Culture: Keys to Success (three hours)
- Shipping Goods to Mexico (six hours)
- Marketing Your Services in Mexico: First Steps (six hours)

In addition to prepared training materials, we offer a speaker service and other training support.