

SME Advisory Board

International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew announced the appointment of the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) Advisory Board on International Trade. The Board held its inaugural meeting in Ottawa in June 2002.

The Board will act as a voice for other SMEs and will serve as a forum for testing new programs and services available to them. It will also advise the Minister on ways to assist them in exporting their products and services.

"SMEs play a critical role in Canada's export performance and economic growth," said Mr. Pettigrew. "Maintaining the ongoing dialogue between the Government of Canada and SMEs is crucial to understanding their changing needs. The Advisory Board will help us ensure that Canadian SMEs are in the best position to take advantage of market opportunities."

It is estimated that 87% of Canada's exporters are SMEs. They are responsible for about 6% of the dollar value of Canadian exports. In 2001, total Canadian exports of goods and

services amounted to \$471 billion, representing 43% of Canada's gross domestic product.

The Board was created after the Minister's SME Task Force completed its three-year mandate in September 2001. The Chair of the Task Force, Bianca Battistini, Executive Vice-President of Can-Am Immigration Services Inc. of Sherbrooke, Quebec, has agreed to continue as Chair of the Advisory Board.

The 17-member board, made up of senior executives of small- and medium-sized companies from across the country, has a three-year mandate. Its next meeting will take place in Vancouver, British Columbia, in October 2002. ★

Canada-Andean countries free trade in the works

International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew announced on August 7, 2002, that Canada and the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) will hold preliminary talks on a proposed free trade agreement.

"A free trade agreement between Canada and the Andean countries will both strengthen our economic relations and promote socio-economic development in the region," said Minister Pettigrew. "We are further developing our commitments to the Americas, while continuing to pursue greater trade and investment liberalization."

The Andean countries are important commercial partners for Canada; bilateral trade in 2001 reached \$3.6 billion, with Canadian exports totalling \$1.5 billion. Cumulative Canadian investment in the Andean countries is estimated at \$11 billion.

The Government of Canada will shortly undertake a broad and comprehensive consultation process to seek input from the provinces and territories, the Canadian public, businesses and non-governmental organizations.

For more information, contact the Regional Trade Policy Division, DFAIT, tel.: (613) 992-0420, fax: (613) 944-0757. ★

A zone of confidence

— continued from page 6

Also, Project NorthStar — a grass roots organization of law enforcement professionals from the federal, state, provincial and local levels on both sides of the border — provides a forum for coordinating communications, intelligence, joint operations, and prosecutions.

For more information, contact DFAIT's United States Relations Division, tel.: (613) 944-7960. ★

(For the unabridged version, see www.infoexport.gc.ca/canadexport and click on "The U.S. Connection".)

Enquiries Service

DFAIT's Enquiries Service provides counselling, publications, and referral services to Canadian exporters. Trade-related information can be obtained by calling 1-800-267-8376 (Ottawa region: (613) 944-4000) or by fax at (613) 996-9709; by calling FaxLink (from a fax machine) at (613) 944-4500; or by accessing the DFAIT Internet site at www

Return requested
if undeliverable:
CanadExport (BCS)
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

