Increased trade with China

Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Pat Carney recently spent two weeks in China exploring opportunities for Canadian companies involved in the export of engineering and technical services. Like Canada, China has designated the energy sector as one of its priority areas for economic development.

Pat Carney

"There are many opportunities for Canadian companies in China," said Miss Carney. "I wanted on a first-hand basis to make the Chinese government aware of the high quality of Canadian technical and management expertise and how that expertise could be of mutual benefit to both our countries," she added.

The trip to China was the first foreign trip for Miss Carney and she was the first Canadian energy minister to visit China since 1972.

In Beijing, Miss Carney met with Minister Gao, minister responsible for the coal industry; Vice-Minister Li of the petroleum industry; President Qin of the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation; Minister Qian, minister of water resources and electric power (MWREP); Minister Ster Jiang, minister responsible for the nuclear industry; and Vice-Premier Li Peng. She also visited heavy oil, coal and hydro-electric facilities in China.

Contract approved

During her visit, Miss Carney announced the approval of a contract to B.C. Hydro International to undertake a $7.45-million, three-year, technical support program for the Electric Power Research Institute in China. The contract, which will be financed by the Canadian International Development Agency, will help China in its efforts to develop its massive energy potential.

The objective of the project is to transfer state-of-the-art technology in various aspects of electric power development and conservation so that the Ministry of Water Resources and Electric Power in China can acquire the capability of utilizing modern techniques in preparing its feasibility studies, system plans and equipment and construction designs.

"B.C. Hydro International will draw on the expertise of personnel from five different Canadian utilities — Hydro Quebec, Ontario Hydro, Manitoba HYDC Research Centre, Saskatchewan Power Corporation and British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority Corporation — to ensure that the best Canadian input is provided," said Miss Carney.

The project will include 17 seminars, presented in China, dealing with utility management, information systems, programming, power system planning, transmission and insulation co-ordination, pollution control and environmental assessment, quality assurance, mechanical stress analysis, combustion research, thermal efficiency, coal analysis and ash handling.

There will also be a series of technical missions of Chinese to Canada, on-the-job training in Canada for Chinese engineers and technical assistance programs involving Canadian specialists visiting China.

Minority government in Ontario

In the May 2, Ontario provincial election, the Conservative Party under its new leader Frank Miller, won by a slim minority in the closest election in the province in more than 60 years.

The Conservatives won 52 ridings in the election, barely defeating the Liberal Party, led by David Peterson.

The Liberals captured 48 seats, their best showing since 1937 when they formed the government. The New Democratic Party (NDP) under leader Bob Rae won 25 seats.

While the Conservatives won the largest number of ridings, the Liberals received the greatest number of votes across the province. They increased their share of the popular vote to 37.8 per cent, while the Conservatives received 37 per cent and the NDP 23.8 per cent.

When the campaign began March 25, the Conservatives held 72 seats, the Liberals 28, the NDP 22 and three seats were vacant.

The election was the closest since 1923, when the Conservatives defeated the Liberals by three seats. A party must win 63 of the legislature's 125 seats to form a majority.

During the last 42 years that the Conservatives have formed the government in Ontario, they have had minority governments in 1975 and 1977.

Speaking from his Muskoka headquarters in the riding of Bracebridge, Premier Miller said he would meet with the two opposition leaders to ensure Ontario isn't faced with another election soon.

"I am sure that they will want, as the people of Ontario will want, to make sure all three parties work together and bring in the policies so that you will have government without an early election," he said.

In his London riding, Mr. Peterson promised to try to make minority government work. He said the next legislature "will only work if we who are elected work in a spirit of goodwill, generosity and co-operation".

NDP leader Bob Rae promised to be "responsible, accountable and democratic" in his approach. "Obviously, the support of the NDP is not only important, it's essential and crucial for the governance of the province. I'm aware of that, and we certainly intend to behave accordingly," he said.

Hubnet offers speedy service

Canstar Communications of Scarborough, Ontario, is currently in the process of producing a new type of data communications network known as Hubnet that combines fibre optics technology with a superior high-speed electronic switching system.

The government of Canada is providing $657 500 for the project under the Program for Industry Laboratory Projects (PILP), which aids the transfer of technology from the government and universities to industry. This program is administered by the National Research Council in consultation with the Department of Communications and other federal departments.

Canstar, a division of Canada Wire and Cable Limited is providing the remaining funding for the Hubnet project, which is expected to amount to some $1 335 000.

Hubnet was invented by E. Stewart Lee and Peter I.P. Boulton, of the University of Toronto's Computer Systems Research Institute. Its immediate precursor was a coaxial cable network they developed to serve the university campus, with funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. Canstar provided additional funds to develop a fibre optics network based on the same concept.

Hubnet links a number of terminals through a series of "hubs" or switching centres that receive and direct transmissions over a network of optical fibres.

Similar networks — known as local area networks or LANs — often malfunction when required to handle large numbers of messages at the same time. This problem is overcome by Hubnet's superior switching system, which operates five times as fast as other comparable systems.

Hubnet's efficiency is also increased through the use of optical fibres instead of metal wires. Optical fibres are hair-thin strands of glass which transmit messages in the form of pulses of light, free of interference and with practically no leakage.