

*In a way, it was business as usual when I went on the latest Team Canada trip to China. Northstar has an extensive track record in that market, and I have made many trips over the years to sign deals and foster our business connections. As well, our partners have outstanding credentials in that market.*

## Celebrating entrepreneurial zeal China's Mr. Bottle

By Scott Shepherd, President and CEO, Northstar Trade Finance Inc.

I should explain that Northstar was formed in 1994 as a partnership of public and private sector organizations, including the federal government, to provide medium-term finance to foreign buyers in support of export transactions in the \$100,000 to \$5 million range. That is a market niche that, although not being served by conventional sources of trade finance, is critical to the success of smaller Canadian companies in world markets, and especially in China.

As it happens, HSBC Bank Canada is a part of the pre-eminent international banking network in China, as well as being one of the banks that provide Northstar with over \$300 mil-

lion in lendable capital, along with Bank of Montreal, Royal Bank, and National Bank. All Northstar loans are insured by Export Development Corporation (EDC), Canada's official export credit agency (ECA). And EDC was one of the first ECAs in the world to establish business ties with China, in 1979.

Since that time, EDC's volume of Chinese activity has grown remarkably. In the last five years alone, EDC has financed or insured \$8 billion worth of exports to Chinese buyers and in 1997 established its very first overseas representation in Beijing.

This time around, as proud members of the Team Canada mission we signed a \$1.8 million loan agreement in support of China Heilongjiang International Project & Technical Cooperation Group Corp. The loan will be used for new liquefied natural gas filling stations in the Harbin area.

### Northstar/EDC Award

But I also took a few hours away from the enormously successful exercise in building bridges between Canada and China that the Team Canada mission represented to take a step some may think is somewhat out of the ordinary.

On February 9, I chaired a ceremony in Beijing held to announce that Huang Le Fu, President of the Zhuhai Zhongfu Industrial Corporation of Zhuhai, Guangdong province was the winner of the first joint Northstar/EDC Entrepreneur Award.

There was keen competition from over 300 worthy candidates. But the

keen business acumen and entrepreneurial zeal Le Fu has displayed in bringing Zhuhai Zhongfu Industrial Corporation to its present leadership position in China's bottling industry — and making himself known throughout the country as China's "Mr. Bottle" — made him the best choice.

### Recognizing entrepreneurship

Why should Northstar get into the business of recognizing entrepreneurship in China?

Partly because it is the mandate of both EDC and Northstar to promote exports from Canada by working closely with the most dynamic and credit-worthy Chinese business leaders we can find.

More than that, it is because in

Le Fu we have found an outstanding partner. There is indeed a new generation of Chinese business leaders. It is one that has embraced the principles of innovation and entrepreneurship, and turned them into practical, commercial success in China and overseas. And Le Fu is in the vanguard of this movement.

We at Northstar have always enjoyed our developing business relationship with a man whose word is his bond. This has won him the trust and respect of business partners and employees alike. For all these reasons, we believe his restless entrepreneurship deserves recognition.

But fostering entrepreneurship requires more than acknowledging achievement. It means providing support to the entrepreneurs of tomorrow when they are just learning the tools of the business trade. And so far from Beijing, right back at my old alma mater, Dalhousie University, Northstar has established three \$5,000 scholarships to encourage MBAs to focus on how to exploit the opportunities that abound in the world of international trade.

It is all part of closing the loop between Canada and China, and the world beyond. ★



Scott Shepherd,  
President and CEO,  
Northstar

### DOING BUSINESS WITH THE U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

Find out more from the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. ([www.canadianembassy.org](http://www.canadianembassy.org)) under "Business Opportunities: U.S. Government Procurement."

Log onto opportunities via the General Services Administration ([www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)), which facilitates purchases by the U.S. government — the world's largest consumer — and the Electronic Posting System site ([www.eps.gov](http://www.eps.gov)).

When you're ready to pursue these opportunities, the Canadian Commercial Corporation ([www.ccc.ca](http://www.ccc.ca)) can assist you with the interpretation of the U.S. procurement system or ensure that as a Canadian company, you are eligible to participate.