

A Look Ahead to the Year 2000 with Minister Pettigrew

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vices they need to be successful in world markets. This is what we are doing and will continue to do while always looking for ways to do it better.

CanadExport: With freer trade and globalization occurring at a rapidly increasing pace, what is the Department doing to assist Canadian firms in foreign markets?

Minister Pettigrew: First and foremost, we have a proven global network of trade commissioners and business development officers — the Trade Commissioner Service [TCS] — in some 130 locations throughout the world. I consider them one of the Department's greatest assets. Not only are they ready, willing and able to help Canadians meet the challenges of international trade, but they are truly dedicated to opening doors for our companies.

We also recognized some time ago that with technological advances in information and communication and in the way business is carried out, the needs of Canadian companies are evolving. We have therefore made significant changes to how the TCS operates abroad. We conducted extensive consultations with our business clients to find out how best to help them succeed in world markets. They told us that the value of the TCS lies in its knowledge of local markets, in finding trade leads and in developing networks. Its added value comes when we hit the streets and get to know the key players and the market niches abroad.

So we've streamlined our focus to six core services [as outlined in every

issue of *CanadExport*] — the ones which our clients told us were most critical to their ability to compete. Our officers can now concentrate their efforts on these essential services and, as a result, are more business-oriented and client-driven.

We also wanted to make access to our trade offices abroad easier for our business clients. So now, for example, you can connect electronically with our offices in your market through the InfoExport Web site. We're at your service 24 hours a day.

These efforts are paying off. Our first annual client survey told us that 81 per cent of our clients are satisfied with our services. The results are encouraging and provide an insight as to where we could improve. The key for us is to listen to our clients. So we're now implementing an action plan in direct response to this feedback and we'll survey clients again this spring.

CanadExport: Are Canadian trade commissioners posted only abroad? What types of services does the government have in place here in Canada to help companies trade internationally?

Minister Pettigrew: We also have trade commissioners in every region across Canada — in our International Trade Centres — who are part of the TCS network. They are there to help exporters. But where we have accomplished a great deal is in the area of getting companies ready for exports. Companies can save a lot of time and money by preparing for global markets right here in Canada. How? By simply getting in touch with Team

Canada Inc, which automatically puts them in contact with a trade expert in their region.

Team Canada Inc is the government's one-stop service centre for Canadian exporters and investors new to foreign markets. We have invested much time and effort in assembling all of the resources and expertise available at the federal level under one roof. Team Canada Inc has also developed a strong network in the regions through partnerships with the provinces and the establishment of regional trade networks. This has brought our services closer to exporters, no matter where they are in Canada, and has eliminated much of the mystery of entering and competing in foreign markets. I am extremely proud and enthusiastic about Team Canada Inc and strongly believe that it will help encourage more companies to export for their

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