

CANADA BUSINESS SERVICE CENTRES

by Maria Bernard

If you have not heard of it by now, you will soon enough! One stop shopping for business! The *Canada Business Service Centres* are a one-stop information depot for entrepreneurs. The Centres were launched to eliminate the bureaucratic confusion which businesses encounter when seeking information on government programs.

Expanding Already

The Centres, which are fully operating in Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Montreal, will be expanded to major cities across Canada. Most of the Centres are run by the federal government and work very closely with provincial governments. The B.C. office is run by the province. Some Centres also work closely with private sector organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

CBSCs are On-Line

Staff are equipped with sophisticated on-line databases to offer accurate contact names and phone numbers and quick answers to hundreds of business questions on issues such as starting a business, labour or import regulations, statistics, marketing assistance or obtaining export funding. CBSCs can be the 'front door' for companies and, when necessary, further export counselling is provided at the nearest International Trade Centre. Officers at the new CBSC handle phone calls and personal visits during office hours, but the outlets have also installed new telephone and facsimile technologies that allow the public to

obtain information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The automated 'FaxLink' service is just one of the many self-service

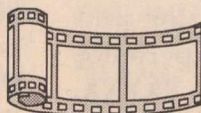
technologies that government departments are using to improve the public service in this era of cutbacks.

The United States Export Assistance Centres

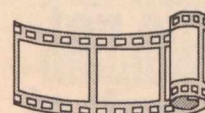
The American counterpart to the Canada Business Service Centre is the U.S. Export Assistance Center. These USEACs integrate international marketing and trade finance assistance for U.S. exporters and consolidate federal export promotion and finance resources to provide delivery of export promotion and trade finance services to local business communities. Pilot projects exist in Baltimore, Chicago, Miami and Long Beach, California. USEACs combine the services and programs of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Eximbank) and the Small Business

Administration (SBA). In certain sites, the Agency for International Development (AID) will participate.

Clients are export-ready, possessing the commitment and resources to establish or expand export operations. However, counselling is available for small and medium enterprises which could become exporters. USEAC staff evaluate the needs of their clients and help develop customized international business strategies based on experience and commitment to exporting. Staff work with clients and direct them to resources to help them meet their export objectives.



WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY



For many years, trade officers have complained there was no video on the Trade Commissioner Service which could be used for outreach activities to explain our services to the Canadian business community. As a Centenary project to meet this need, we have just produced a short video on the TCS to introduce our Service to Canadian firms, especially those just getting started in international business.

Copies of this video "*Windows of Opportunity*" and other material to guide companies on working with the TCS are being distributed across Canada to trade and industry associations, local chambers of commerce, provinces, regional and municipal economic developers, banks and FBDB offices, and the International Trade Centres. Copies are also being sent out to posts so the video can be shown to any Canadian business visitors who are not familiar with our role.