

GETTING TO KNOW BANCOMEXT

Canadians interested in doing business in Mexico should acquaint themselves with one of the three offices of *Bancomext* (Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior) in Canada. This institution, whose functions combine those of our own Export Development Corporation and, to some extent, the commercial sections of our embassies and consulates abroad, are located in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Bancomext is a state financial institution and a development bank. Its main objectives are to promote non-oil exports and foreign investments in Mexico, and to finance foreign trade transactions.

As such, the majority of its concerns are directed to Mexicans seeking to enter foreign markets and to assist those abroad who wish to import from or invest in Mexico. But with a broad promotional mandate in its foreign offices, *Bancomext* willingly provides assistance to exporters requiring information or guidance on how to do business in Mexico.

"Promotion is the biggest aspect of the foreign offices," says Marcela Orozco, a Commercial Attache in the Montreal office. "We are often like brokers, arranging introductions. A Canadian investor might come in looking for a partner. We can provide lists of people in the field. We have a big library, and an excellent database. We have offices all over Mexico. If someone wants to find an associate in Tijuana, or Michoacan, we can contact the local office and generate useful information for the interested Canadian."

Bancomext works with SECOFI, the trade wing of the Mexican embassy (see *Access*, September 1994). Officials of *Bancomext* take part in seminars, trade shows and conferences. They are in touch with Chambers of Commerce, trade associations and individual companies.

The Bank also brings missions from Mexico to Canada, and occasionally vice versa, where useful mutual interests have been identified. "We buy the tickets and organize the groups, arrange their itineraries, help set up contacts. Those travelling to such events only have to

"We are often like brokers, arranging introductions."

pay for their hotels and food."

A group came recently from Monterrey to Montreal for a multi-sectoral show, with their arrangements made by *Bancomext*. "It's a lot of work in a multi-sectoral, making sure everyone's interests are represented, and that there is a good reason for everyone to be there."

The Bank plays an important role as the Mexican government's financial agent in foreign markets, and takes part in negotiations between private- and public-sector agencies. It has lines of credit with leading international financial institutions, commercial banks, governmental import-export agencies in industrialized countries, and institutions such as the World Bank.

Among its consultative functions, *Bancomext* is continuously assessing the range of exportable goods by identifying Mexican companies entering the export field for the first time and those with the potential to meet foreign demand efficiently. It also provides advisory services on technical, commercial, financial and legal matters in order to adapt Mexican products to international demand requirements. These and other counselling services are available upon request to Canadian firms and individuals interested in engaging in trade or making productive investments in Mexico.

There are *Bancomext* offices in every major city in Europe and oth-

ers in Asia and Latin America — an information network that is truly global in scale. *Bancomext* also produces some publications, and circulates others prepared by both the Mexican and Canadian governments on specific aspects of trade between the two countries. These publications, which are free of charge, may be obtained by contacting the nearest *Bancomext* office.

Marcela Orozco also recommends a volume entitled *Trade Directory of Mexico*, an annual compendium listing over 4,000 Mexican companies and offering information on the firm's size, number of employees and export and import product lines as well as up-to-date contact names. It also contains material on government support programs, buyers' credit information, financial institutions offering export/import support and a reference guide to products by harmonized tariff code, among many other useful data.

For information on how to order (print copies are U.S.\$70, plus U.S.\$15 for shipping/handling) call 1-800-835-7480.

Ms. Orozco, who has been in Canada about three years, feels the presence of *Bancomext* and the increasing mutual interest between Canada and Mexico since NAFTA have led to much clearer understanding. "When I first came, people were a little sceptical about Mexico," she recalls. "I have seen in this time — slowly — that Mexico is gaining a different image, that Canadians are interpreting Mexico in a new way. I love Canada," she adds, "and we are all learning more about each other."

To request *Bancomext* publications, you may fax:

Montreal: (514) 287-1844
Toronto: (416) 867-1487
Vancouver: (604) 682-1355

First Show at Canadian Business Centre

On September 21, the Canadian Business Centre in Mexico City opened for business, holding a solo show by the tourism industry.

Ten companies, chiefly from Western Canada, presented materials aimed at the burgeoning Mexican market for winter holidays, particularly skiing packages. Representatives of the firms gave presentations, held meetings, established contacts in Mexico and generally worked in a focussed way to show Mexican counterparts how to market Canada as a winter destination.

With a growing middle class, Mexico is seeing those in search of vacations outside the country venturing further afield than the traditional destinations in Latin America, Spain and the United States. As many Canadians know, Mexico is itself an attractive vacation spot, with everything from beautiful beaches to colonial architecture to ancient indigenous sites. Mexico has not, however, developed winter sports domestically, and the western Canadian tourism officials recognized a very significant niche opportunity and moved to fill it.

In its first outing, the Centre provided an excellent venue for its clients. With the flexibility and variety of spaces available in the Polanco site, Canadian tourism was able to showcase itself in a suitable and productive light.

Staff realize that the Centre will never look the same two weeks run-



CANADIAN BUSINESS CENTRE
CENTRO CANADIENSE DE NEGOCIOS
CENTRE D'AFFAIRES CANADIEN

ning, as each sector uses its offerings in a different way. But the colourful posters and slides of some of Canada's most beautiful sites made

an attractive and vibrant first application of the Centre, and did much to increase awareness of Canada in the Mexican market.

Coming soon at the CBCM are several solo food shows, featuring the products of Atlantic Canada, the central region and western Canada. These will take place throughout the fall and early winter.

For Your Reference Shelf...

As part of the Access North America program, Industry Canada has prepared a series of sector-specific booklets to help business take advantage of the opportunities NAFTA offers.

Each booklet provides product-specific information on tariff rates, tariff phase-outs and rules of origin. Each also includes an overview of the industry in the North American context, and looks at potential market opportunities in Mexico and other provisions relevant to manufacturers and distributors in each sector.

Booklets in the series may be ordered, in either English or French, by fax at (613)952-0540. They are also electronically accessible through Internet (DEBRA.DGBT.DOC.CA), or on disc from the NAFTA Information Desk, Industry Canada, 5th Floor, East Tower, 235 Queen St., Ottawa K1A 0H5.

NEW RULES FOR PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

The Mexican Trade Department (SECOFI) has announced new rules for certification of products intended for sale in Mexico.

All products subject to compliance must be certified by a government-accredited certification body or by the Direccion General de Normas (DGN) branch of SECOFI.

200 organizations are being accredited to undertake the certifications; those products not covered by a certified organization must be cer-

tified by DGN. The procedure for certification requires sampling, testing and/or obtaining a quality assurance certificate.

The new rules are described in a SECOFI document, "Notice of Official Certification Policy for Products Subject to Compliance with Mexican Official Standards." It is available from the Standards Council of Canada in Ottawa (tel. 613-238-3222; fax 613-995-4564).

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trademarks by contractual agreement. Most franchises currently prospering in Mexico are in the fast-food or hotel sectors, but new intellectual property laws may encourage growth in other sectors.

A well-structured and appropriate form of partnership can be extremely beneficial to both parties. Each company can focus on its own strength. When a trustworthy alliance has been formed, risks are shared and capacities are strengthened. The creative exchange that will inevitably take place can expand each compa-

ny's ability to venture into new fields and new markets.

For more on partnering, readers might consult the volume *Canada-Mexico: Partnering for Success*, an invaluable introduction to the overall picture of trading with Mexico.

For copies, call Prospectus at (613) 231-2727.