

# GETTING TO KNOW THE MEXICAN INVESTMENT BOARD

The Mexican Investment Board (MIB) is a non-profit joint venture of the government of Mexico and the private financial sector. Its role is to assist foreign investors in Mexico.

The Secretary of Trade and Industry is Chairman of the MIB, and the Presidents of both the Bankers' and Brokers' Associations are members of the board. The MIB offers its knowledge and support to ensure that investment projects advance at the right speed and in the right direction. As a non-profit organization, its mission is to help foreign investors at every step of the way as they explore and pursue business opportunities in Mexico.

The MIB helps with:

- Information on the whole range of issues affecting decisions about whether to invest and how to go about it; the different regions of the country and what they have to offer; setting up operations; costs; markets; suppliers; labour availability and skills; transportation and communications; government incentives and taxation. The MIB

provides detailed briefings, including profiles of markets and industries, and information on relevant government policies and programs.

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- Advice on the viability of projects; on obtaining banking, legal and accounting services; in dealing with authorities at federal, state and local levels; in finding suppliers and potential partners.
- Assistance with arranging visits to Mexico and planning an agenda, as well as in contacting the right government authorities, key firms and business people.

One of the outstanding and easily accessible contributions of the Mexican Investment Board is the series of publications it produces profiling various sectors in Mexico.

Subjects currently covered range from agribusiness and automotive industries to transportation and electronics and textiles.

The MIB also has publications on intellectual property protection, on the new foreign investment law, and an economic and business overview. It provides case histories of success stories in Mexico, to introduce a sampling of business procedures and how they work.

Although the Mexican Investment Board does not have any self-standing offices in Canada, it can be approached through the offices of SECOFI in Ottawa (See article page I) or of Bancomext in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver (see October issue).

If you wish to contact the Mexican Investment Board (in Spanish, Consejo Mexicano de Inversion — CMI) directly, write to:  
CMI,  
Reforma 915,  
Col. Lomas de Chapultepec,  
11000 Mexico, D.F.,  
Mexico.  
Tel: 011-525-202-7804  
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obscure corner of Mexico.

Mr. Poblano reiterates the consistent theme of Mexican trade officials — that, after preliminary research, Canadians should visit Mexico, meet the people, and be prepared to take the time to get to know those with whom they plan to do business. That approach, clearly, is national, not merely regional, and may mean more Canadians will be seen in Michoacan, Zacatecas and Oaxaca in the coming months and years.

## Regional — from page I

customers in the various regions of the country. The plan is to start with "the business states" because they have the most experience in dealing with foreign partners and investors — "we can develop the program drawing on their experience," says Mr. Poblano — and to have the first 10 states covered by early next year.

In the meantime, Bancomext has offices in about 40 centres around Mexico, and is, as always, a very good first call. Bancomext officials are already familiar with the local contacts in many areas, and if their formidable database is integrated with or accessible to a SECOFI file constructed specifically on a regional basis, no one will be far away from accurate and up-to-date knowledge about what may still be, to foreigners, an



# INFORMATICS: Integration/Services in Demand

supplier; this is one of the challenges to be addressed in the short term.

Given the quality of our software products and services, our location, our membership in NAFTA, and the growing trade relations between Mexico and Canada, it seems a not insurmountable problem. Trade promotion efforts, such as a planned Canada Pavilion featuring 15 Canadian informatics companies at COMDEX '95 next March in Mexico City, will help open doors (for information, fax Jan Mullins (613) 993-9991). What can the industry itself do to help Canadian firms capitalize on any interest produced by promotion efforts?

## Flexibility

A key requirement will be to supply products that meet Mexican technical specifications. Canadians already have a reputation in Mexico for being more flexible in their dealings with Mexican clients, and in their ability to adapt products, than some other exporters.

It will be important to ensure that good Spanish-language versions of software are available. The United States, with its huge and increasingly educated Hispanic population, has an automatic edge here, but Canada's history of dealing with translation at high level can be an aid in approaching this matter with meticulous attention. Enrollment in Spanish-language courses nationwide indicates the growing availability of a domestic talent pool of Spanish speakers and writers.

## Local Support

Companies will need to position

good local support for their products, by nurturing partnerships and establishing satellite offices in order to advise clients on any difficulties they run into with new products. Training Mexican staff may form a key to success in keeping Canadian products operating at optimum levels.

## Competitive Pricing

Competitive pricing will be an essential factor in developing a good market share. U.S. firms price aggressively, and market powerfully from their many Spanish-language outlets.

## Expansion

The privatization in 1992 of Telmex, the Mexican national telephone system, opened up a number of informatics opportunities that are still growing in Mexico. But, in order for Mexico to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by NAFTA, it must expand the implementation of electronic data interchange and related technology beyond its existing use. Among growth areas identified:

- *personal computer use*: the best solution for meeting the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses.
- *industry-specific software*: increasingly preferred over generic solution applications.
- *network growth*: the current telecommunications system has significant inadequacies; the market for cable televisions and

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