

furniture at competitive prices.

Building Awareness and Market Knowledge

Canadian companies need to receive timely information on the Japanese market for furniture (residential, contract and office). The Canadian Embassy will provide market information/intelligence for dissemination to interested Canadian exporters, working through the industry associations and Industry Canada's National Sector Team.

Adapting Products for the Marketplace

The conventional wisdom is that imported furniture has to be sized for Japan before entering the market. This is not always the case, nor is it the sole criteria for successful exporting to Japan. Recent shifts in purchasing patterns demonstrate that consumers increasingly favour comfort, innovative design, quality and lifestyle-related factors when choosing products. However, manufacturers should be prepared to discuss design changes with Japanese buyers, since a willingness to recognize the differences and the development of products suitable for the market can result in a lucrative long-term relationship with the importer.

Promoting Products in the Marketplace

Recent efforts to encourage Canadian exports have focussed on bringing buyers, architects, specifiers and other decision makers to Canada to attend trade shows and to meet with manufacturers on site. This strategy, which has resulted in several million dollars in direct and follow-on sales in past years, will be continued. In Japan, the annual Tokyo Furniture Fair is the prime showcase for both residential and contract furniture. This venue provides a marketing opportunity for the well established exporter, who must

meet with his clients on a regular basis, and serves as an introduction to the market for new exporters. In 1997/98, several new-to-the-market companies will participate in the show under the auspices of the Canadian Embassy.

From time to time, the Embassy's facilities have been used for solo shows with good results, and plans are underway for one or two shows during this fiscal year.

Japanese agents of Canadian furniture manufacturers continue to participate in solo lifestyle shows in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka, resulting in increased exposure for some products.

Companies with Japanese agents may take advantage of Tokyo Gas Co.'s showroom in Shinjuku. This space, called Ozone, displays imported furniture. It is rented to Japanese importers and is open to visitors who are interested in imported furniture that suits their lifestyle and that provides comfort, quality and original design.

Activities

- Invite an incoming mission of buyers to the Canada Home Furnishing Mart in January 1998. (For self-funded buying trips to Canada, assistance in developing appointment schedules will be offered whenever possible.)
- Support an industry initiative for a significant Canadian presence at the annual Tokyo Furniture Fair, including repeat exhibitors from the 1996 pavilion.
- Arrange for Canadian furniture manufacturers or representatives of the associations to give a seminar to