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products, largely to the United States.

The Win Exports-registered company has also developed risk-assessment software for determining the risk of

[through joint venture] to get the contract in China," explains Dr. Thé.

The contract, signed in September 2000, was for the sale of Lakes Environmental's ISC-AERMOD View

Lakes Environmental Software Inc.

toxic pollutants to human health and to eco-systems. In fact, Dr. Thé traces the Chinese contract partially to the attention received for being the only company able to develop software to implement the guidelines in the human and ecological risk-assessment protocols developed by the EPA in 1997.

While receiving rave reviews in the United States, the company was asked by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to submit a proposal to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), which was searching worldwide for companies with innovative technology to bring to Japan.

Embassy facilitates partnership

The only company chosen, Lakes Environmental found itself on a JETRO-financed trip to Japan in March 1999. There it was given exposure to potential partners at meetings set up by Trade Commissioner Andrew Smith at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo.

"As a direct result of this exposure, we were contacted by a Japanese company, which teamed up with us

software, an air pollution impact software package that integrates the three most widely used EPA models. Regulatory authorities in 149 cities in all 39 regions of China have been using the software since October 2000.

Opening doors for other Canadians

Dr. Thé considers the sale to be the first step into other environmental-related activities in China — which could provide opportunities for other Canadian firms. "Once the software has been used to estimate the size of the air pollution problem, there will be opportunities for risk-assessment software and services, pollution control design services, and pollution control equipment. We fully anticipate being able to co-ordinate the implementation of Canadian technology in China."

Tap into government services

Making contact with the appropriate trade commissioners is the first step Dr. Thé recommends to new exporters. "From the beginning we've contacted trade officers all over the world and

received good tips and information."

Finding a local partner is also important for penetrating Asian markets, as is receiving government support. "If a client sees your government is dedicating time to you, then you must have a worthwhile activity," says Dr. Thé.

Dr. Thé also recommends going the extra mile. While the Chinese contract was still in the negotiation stages, Lakes Environmental took the initiative to have its software translated into Mandarin.

It was an expense that paid off.

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