

The potential of the Mexican market has been recognized by many Canadian companies. Still, there are many Canadian producers with products and services that could meet emerging Mexican needs who have not yet discovered Mexico.

Even for those companies that are aware of the opportunities, moving into Mexico can be a daunting endeavor. While distance is no longer a real barrier — Mexico City is no further from Montreal than Vancouver — language and cultural differences can create significant obstacles. Moreover, Mexico has only recently emerged from a decades-long period of protectionism. As a result, many Mexican companies are not yet accustomed to an open market, and their management techniques are slow to adapt to the newly-liberalized trading environment. Market information is also much more difficult to obtain in Mexico than it is in Canada.

The need to deal with a rapidly growing number of opportunities presents Canada's Trade Commissioner Service with a major challenge. This is especially true in light of the declining resources available to government agencies generally. In response to this challenge, the Latin America and Caribbean Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has taken bold action to reorient its programs and to make better use of its resources. The Trade Action Plan for Mexico reflects a major re-engineering of the entire process of trade promotion.

THE TEAM

The Team Canada concept underlies this new approach to supporting Canada's exporters. It stresses the use of DFAIT's Trade Commissioner Service as the delivery arm for coordinated trade promotion efforts by various federal government departments. DFAIT's role within the team is to identify and assess emerging new markets, to improve Canadian access to those markets and to provide market intelligence and support in Mexico. These functions mesh closely with those of DFAIT's Team Canada partners, including other federal government departments (Industry Canada, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, ACOA, FORDQ, WD) and provincial governments. Those domestic partners help exporters to become export-ready before they leave Canada. Improved links between the Mexico and Canada-based members of the team will ensure that timely market information prepared by DFAIT reaches users who access delivery systems based in Canada.

Trade commissioners are located in Canada's Embassy in Mexico City, in consulates in Monterrey and Guadalajara, and in the Mexico Division in Ottawa. Industry Canada trade specialists are also found in the International Trade Centres (ITCs) located with the Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs) in every Canadian province. The InfoCentre in Ottawa and the ITCs in the regions are often the first points of contact for companies seeking export information on Mexico.