

Behind the Scenes in Paris

By Campbell Morrison

When Anouck Colson, the deputy manager of SolarWall Europe, a subsidiary of Canadian company Conservall Engineering Inc., accepted a prestigious award in France in December for her company's exceptional air-heating technology SolarWall, it capped a long and fruitful relationship with the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS).

The company was so pleased with its entry into the European market that it issued a news release celebrating the Canada-France award. International Trade Minister Ed Fast was equally pleased, and DFAIT issued a news release, too.

While neither news release mentioned the TCS, Conservall Vice-President Duncan Coutts certainly makes it clear that the TCS was instrumental in the company gaining access to an important new market.

"Thank you again for all the superb support you have provided us during our move into the French market," Coutts wrote to Denis Trottier, a trade commissioner at the Canadian embassy in Paris, on the day of the award ceremony. "Receiving this award is testament to the excellent work by Anouck and the SolarWall Europe team, but also to you as a supporting partner since day one."

"The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service gives small companies the confidence they need, through access to information and high-level contacts, in order to venture out into new markets," he wrote.

Although the company already had large clients in Canada and the United States for its SolarWall, which offers large-scale energy reductions by heating the ventilation air, this was its first foray into the French market.

As far back as 2008, Trottier and the Canadian TCS team in France were helping Conservall to find its way in Europe. In November 2008, the TCS provided support to Conservall at the Canadian Pavilion at the International Trade Fair for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, which is one of the best-known international fairs in its field and is held annually in Paris. Further advice was provided, and the company added, among others, the Pollutec trade show in Lyon and the Salon des Maires et des Collectivités Locales in Paris to its outreach plans.

Even before 2008, Trottier and his colleagues were making sure the company complied with all of the complex construction requirements and had all of the myriad permits it needed to operate in France.

Trottier emphasizes the teamwork that went into supporting a Canadian company over time, and says it's the company itself that deserves the credit for succeeding in France.

"Conservall has a proven product with a strong and successful record," says Trottier. "Our job was to make sure the company had the information it needed to succeed. The Conservall team deserves all the credit for showing ambition, creating a solid product and having the courage to step out of the North American nest. All we did was help the company obtain all the information it needed to do business here in France."

But Conservall's Coutts begs to differ.

"The Trade Commissioner Service went beyond the call of duty to help us succeed," says Coutts. "Without Trottier and his team, there is no way we could have understood the obstacles and overcome them in a few short years. As an export-ready enterprise, we would have been able to get there eventually, but it would have taken us longer and added more cost to our endeavour."

Today, Coutts and Conservall are looking to new markets, and they will be sure to knock on the TCS door wherever they decide to go.



Anouck Colson (left) and International Trade Minister Ed Fast at the small and medium-sized enterprises award ceremony in France
photo: DFAIT