

# Canada's Brand

by Campbell Morrison

When Canada Day is celebrated at our missions around the globe, it is done against the background of how others perceive us. Getting the "Canada brand" right is the collective work of all DFAIT employees, and in particular of the trade commissioners who put the brand to work in promoting Canada's prosperity agenda.

Nations have brands. Like global clichés, they offer the world's citizens a fast and easy way to distinguish one country from another. They are often based on very little knowledge, are created over long periods of time and are very persistent.

Louise Heslop, an expert on branding at Carleton University's Sprott School of Business, has advised the Government of Canada on some of its branding efforts, most recently Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and its Canada Brand International initiative.

"People have funny ideas about branding," Heslop says. "It is not just a logo, a tag line or a name. A brand is a promise of benefits delivered."

She adds that Canada's brand is not about Mounties and maple syrup, beavers and wide open country, winter and hockey. Although those are part of it, Canada's brand goes deeper. It scores high on trust and integrity and openness but lower on creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

"Canada is largely unknown in specifics but has a strong emotional brand," she says.

Branding (a verb, not a noun, stresses Heslop) is an important part of the work done by employees of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

The Invest in Canada team, for one, is engaged around the world selling Canada as a destination for foreign investment. Led by Marcel Gaumont, Director, Marketing, the team selects key events and venues to showcase Canada's story. In May, the team was in Brussels for the European Business Summit, a major annual meeting of some 2,500 key business leaders, senior politicians and business media in the European Union.

As a "main partner" of the event, Invest in Canada brought in Canadian keynote speakers, hosted a business luncheon on doing business in Canada and saw to the Canadian presence in the Networking Village's business lounge.

"Canada is both a tough and an easy sell," says Ghislain Robichaud, a deputy director for investment marketing. "On the one hand, Canada's reputation as a stable, fair and open country means we can get through any door. On the other hand, our lower score as an innovative and creative economy means we have a lot of educating to do."

Invest in Canada was also in the United States this year, where it teamed up with the *Financial Times* on a seven-city Focus on Canada tour that travelled from New York to Los Angeles, highlighting Canada's many investment advantages. The events attracted thousands of participants, who heard about Canada's economic story.

"We really opened a lot of American eyes about Canada's advantages," says Dominic Aquilina, Senior Investment Promotion Officer. "This kind of direct engagement pays dividends through investments and partnerships that create jobs and prosperity."

But Invest in Canada is just one kind of branding. Advocacy is another. DFAIT's advocacy program in the United States engages Americans on a wide range of subjects from energy to security to competitiveness and beyond.

"Americans sometimes make energy or security decisions without taking into consideration the impact these may have on our close and highly integrated



From left, Maddy Boccuzzi, Marcy Grossman and Christina Burke represent Canada at the 2011 Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles.