

SHARING TRADE SECRETS

EXPORTING DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN BIG BUCKS

Canadian know-how, just like products, is a highly marketable commodity abroad. Even if it does not necessarily translate into large dollar signs, it is a valuable tool for exporting Canadian expertise and penetrating foreign markets. Take the case of the Ontario Natural Resources Safety Association (ONRSA).

As its name implies, ONRSA is primarily an organization that promotes health and safety in the forestry, mining, and pulp and paper communities through the development and delivery of programs and services.

Although its primary jurisdiction is the province of Ontario, ONRSA has been looking increasingly outside of the province and beyond Canada, to other countries.

"As the largest and best organized health and safety organization in these sectors in Canada, we see great potential in export exposure," says John Connors, the Executive Director of ONRSA.

Prospecting in Chile

One of the Association's most recent and largest forays into foreign markets included a week-long prospecting trip to Chile.

The occasion was the Second International Meeting on Work in the Forest Sector, in Concepción,

at the invitation of the Chilean Safety Association (Asociacion Chilena de Seguridad - ACHS).

According to Connors, "The state of health and safety among forestry workers in Chile has great potential for improvement."

Based on his discussions with both managers and workers and on-site tours that included ACHS Workers' Hospital, the National Steel Mill, University of Concepción School of Forestry, and plantation forests, Connors came up with several recommendations.

"There appears to be a real need," he says, "for high quality technical/trades training in the natural resource sectors, including forestry and mining.

"In addition, there is a need for national health and safety standards with inspection and enforcement provisions, including an adequate number of trained inspectors with sufficient powers to influence workplace and work-force compliance."

Connors also noted that the emergency services systems in Chile are fragmented and require coordination, cooperation, standardization and training.

What would be the immediate benefit of such improvements?

"They are fundamental," Connors believes, "to achieving more competitive forest sector productivity which salary increases alone will not bring."

How do the Chileans see this challenge?

According to Connors, "Participants in the conference — and they included government as well as labour and management — gave evidence of enthusiastic resolve to address the health, safety and productivity issues facing the forest industry."

And since the Chilean Safety Association is also firmly committed to this task, it offers a great potential for ONRSA.

Contracts in sight

The visit has already paid off.

"As a matter of fact," says Connors, "our two associations are just on the verge of signing a joint venture agreement for the translation and marketing of each other's safety material."

Connors is hopeful that the agreement will be officially signed within the next few months.

What's even more important is that with this foot in the door, the opportunity exists to penetrate the whole South and Central

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