

In Vietnam and Malaysia, which I recently visited, or on previous trips to the Gulf States, the European Community, Russia and Ukraine ... the story is always the same: Canada has the goods and services to sell that the world wants to buy. Just as important, we can offer excellent investment and strategic alliance opportunities.

The hands-on business people I travel with on these trade missions know that the possibilities are out there. They tell me that they also come to learn how much International Trade Canada can help realize that potential.

Still, as a country, we have a long way to go toward maximizing our efforts to exploit global opportunities. For all the importance of trade to our national well-being, only 32 per cent of manufacturers export in the first place. Less than 100 of Canada's 30,000 exporting firms account for over half of our sales abroad.

Of course, for first-time exporters, making the commitment to export is a big decision. After all, you are leaving the familiar environment of your domestic market to tackle an unfamiliar foreign market. You will do battle against entrenched competitors for customers who don't know your company.

But you are not alone. Canadian Trade Commissioners live and work in Mexico, for example, as they do in over one hundred countries throughout the world. They can be your eyes and ears in distant or unfamiliar markets. They help exporters start or expand their international marketing plans. Getting to know our Trade Commissioners will help to cut costs, avoid pitfalls and seize opportunities.

Mexico: A Case Study

Let us look more closely at the burgeoning new market in Mexico to see how the new resources we are investing in trade development there will help Canadians benefit from the trade liberalization that NAFTA represents.

In the NAFTA talks, we won substantially improved access to the Mexican market, in that:

- * with very limited exceptions, Mexico's tariffs and import licensing restrictions will all be gone in ten years;
- * we will have the opportunity to bid for major Mexican government procurement contracts;