
MARKET ACCESS AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Both the federal and provincial governments manage programs that encourage business to expand beyond Canada's borders. Within the federal government, 16 departments and agencies have merged their international business development activities under the banner of Team Canada Inc. The members of Team Canada Inc cooperate in providing international business intelligence, market access information and marketing advice to Canadian business through a single window, via the Internet (www.exportsource.ca) or via telephone at 1 888 811-1119.

Another network, led by the Investment Partnerships Branch, DFAIT (IT), works with companies, trade associations, and provincial, municipal and regional development agencies looking to attract new investors. Canada offers investors a highly skilled workforce, a productive and dynamic economy, a cost-competitive environment and convenient access to the main international markets with preferred access to the United States. The Investment Partnerships Branch can be contacted via the Internet (www.investincanada.gc.ca).

The Trade Commissioner Service, with officers in 146 offices overseas and in 12 regional offices across Canada, is the antenna for both of these networks; it understands the regulations, policy issues and barriers that Canadian business may face in international commerce. The trade offices are a direct point of contact for Canadian business people in foreign markets. Officers are trained to help companies deal with a foreign environment and to help resolve trade policy issues that negatively influence commercial transactions.

With the integration of the International Trade Centres, DFAIT (IT) now has offices in Canada and abroad that focus on international business development. The DFAIT (IT) regional offices (formerly known as International Trade Centres) attract new business clients to participate in international business (client acquisition), serve business clients already active in international business (client retention), help clients to grow their businesses (client competitiveness), and develop DFAIT (IT)'s relationships with provinces and municipalities across the spectrum of the department's international commerce interests (trade, investment, science and technology, and trade policy). These regional offices are being fully integrated with DFAIT (IT)'s so that the Trade Commissioner Service operates as a seamless operation in both Canada and abroad for Canadian clients. This international business development network is one of the main sources of information for Canadian trade policy initiatives that seek to expand access for Canadian firms in international markets.

The International Business Development Branch of DFAIT (IT) is the domestic side of the Trade Commissioner Service. The Branch's Market Research Centre publishes timely, relevant and focused market information products on almost every country in the world for the Canadian business community. The Branch's Market Support Division produces specialized reports that profile Canadian industry capabilities in several industrial sectors. The International Business Opportunities Centre disseminates timely sales leads and business opportunities from our offices abroad directly to Canadian companies. Links to the International Business Development Branch and to each of the trade offices abroad are available at the trade commissioner Web site (www.infoexport.gc.ca). This site is also the gateway to the Virtual Trade Commissioner, a free Internet service that offers direct access to Canada's trade commissioners as well as information, leads and news tailored to the needs of any business.