

Small company finds Canada offers big opportunities

Shackleton Engineering is a UK company incorporated in 1966 to manufacture all types of industrial gearboxes for a wide range of heavy industry. It sells its gearboxes throughout the UK, and also exports to Europe, the Far East, Middle East and North America.

Now, though, it is going one better, by building a manufacturing facility overseas — in Cut Knife, Saskatchewan.

A 12,000 square foot plant is being constructed there, to manufacture oil field pumping unit gearboxes. Initially, the plant will employ up to about 20 people; but the number of jobs is expected to climb to around 60 or 70 within three years.

Why did Shackleton opt for Cut Knife? According to Bryan Shackleton, the company's managing director in the UK, it was a matter of elimination.

Nearly all the products that the company was exporting to North America were oil field pumping unit gearboxes; it made sense to manufacture them there. Canada was chosen in part because of its

resource base and expanding oil and gas industry. Saskatchewan is close to the heart of that industry; and, as an added benefit to Shackleton, there is no other gearbox manufacturer in the province. And finally, the community of Cut Knife actively pursued the company's investment; and the local population greeted it with genuine interest and enthusiasm.

Says Shackleton: 'You have to make sure that you do your homework; investigate your project very thoroughly before you proceed, and in particular, check on the availability of materials.

'But always bear in mind that there is an immense potential for many industries in Canada. The Canadian people, in our experience, are very keen to be trained; they are good workers; and they are very reliable and loyal people to employ.

'If there is a market for your products in Canada, then don't hesitate. There are excellent investment opportunities there, and extremely helpful organisations to make your initial investigations easier. Also, you can apply for attractive grants and loans. ♦

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,
a growing business centre



New immigration programme opens doors for business people

Canada has always welcomed entrepreneurs, but now it is laying out the welcome mat as never before. It has established an Immigration Business Development Section within its Immigration Division, and it has given the section a mandate to ensure that entrepreneurs, who are thinking of emigrating to Canada, receive quick, efficient and specialised immigration services that take account of their special requirements.

This questions-and-answers article — based on interviews with Canadian Business Development Officers — examines Canada's new entrepreneur programme, and shows how the programme might benefit you, if you are in a position to establish a business in Canada.

What new services is Canada providing for prospective immigrant entrepreneurs?

We are trying to cut out the red tape and bureaucratic delays that are sometimes associated with immigration applications and provide a personalised service for the applicant.

A potential immigrant who wants to set up a business in Canada can phone or call at the Immigration Division and, without filling out any forms, talk to a visa officer who will informally evaluate their chances of qualifying under the entrepreneur program; provide them with advice on business opportunities in Canada; and put them in touch with provincial and federal government officials in London and in Canada, who will be able to provide further assistance.

What sort of people are you looking for?

We are looking for experienced business people with the personal funds required to set up a business that will create employment for Canadians.

The level of funds required will depend on the business project. Most people who receive immigrant visas as entrepreneurs have over £100,000 to invest, and applicants with less than £50,000 are seldom successful. Business experience is also an important factor. We are looking for people with a successful track record in their own business or with equivalent managerial experience.

In the UK, much is being done to encourage the potential entrepreneur and thus the development of small businesses. Are there similar schemes operating in Canada?

Yes, there are many similar schemes operated by federal, provincial, and local governments in Canada, and the immigrant entrepreneur would have access to these once he or she was established in Canada.

Small business is recognised as a key part of the Canadian economy. There is a federal Minister of Small Business. The Federal Business Development Bank has been set up to assist small business. And all the provincial governments have ministries dedicated to helping small businesses grow. The taxation systems also contain many incentives for small business.

Is every type of business encouraged provided it has the potential for creating jobs?

Yes, provided the business plan is viable and the jobs created offer reasonable long-term prospects.