

Embedded for Excellence

By Campbell Morrison

This past October in Toronto, Canada hosted for the first time ever the Greenbuild International Conference and Expo. This was an opportunity for the Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) to showcase Canadian expertise in the green building sector. Through a coordinated effort by missions abroad, regional offices and Headquarters (and several key partners), Canadian exhibitor participation in this signature event tripled, and Canadian businesses succeeded in securing new international contacts and higher profiles among the leaders in this growing sector.

In the middle of it all was Michael Calvert, DFAIT's Global Practice Lead, Green Building. Calvert is one of a number of trade commissioners who are embedded in associations throughout Canada. These co-located positions are proving to be important conduits of understanding between

DFAIT and Canada's private sector. This initiative was recognized for excellence when the trade commissioners were presented with a Deputy Ministers' Citation in June.

"DFAIT has tried something that has never been attempted before," wrote Peter MacArthur, Director General of Global Business Opportunities, to his team following the citation. "It opened itself up to the 'voice' and 'ear' of Canadian business to improve support to posts abroad seeking to advance Canadian business goals.

"Embedded DFAIT staff can help association leadership and member companies to better navigate our global network, provide more industry knowledge to posts abroad and reflect back into government industry interests, expectations and capabilities," MacArthur added. "Silos are being broken down within government and between industry and government. Feedback from the private sector has been uniformly positive."

Calvert is embedded with the Canada Green Building Council which was created in 2003 and has a mission to lead and accelerate the transformation to high-performing, healthy green buildings, homes and communities throughout Canada. The Greenbuild International Conference, previously held only in the United States, brought together 23,000 delegates and 1,700 exhibitors, including more than 200 Canadian companies. Planning began months earlier so the Canadian private sector could achieve the highest global profile possible at this important event.

"It was a model of amazing collaboration," Calvert says. "Our great success at Greenbuild 2011 was achieved through the dedication and hard work of more than 40 trade commissioners from posts across Canada and around the world."

The response from the Canadian private sector was extremely positive, he adds. "Initial reports were that a lot of deals were made and a lot of great long-term international contacts were identified."

Three dozen missions abroad, with support from various DFAIT funding programs, identified and encouraged some 200 overseas buyers to attend the October 4 to 7 event in Toronto. Delegations came from the U.S., Latin America, Europe and Asia.

"It was rewarding and a pleasure to get businesses interested in going to Canada," says Bill Stolz, a Canadian trade commissioner based in Atlanta, Ga. "There is a huge interest in green building technology, and hosting this conference in Canada was a unique opportunity to showcase Canadian know-how."

At Headquarters, the geographic divisions made a significant contribution. Alexis Roy and Robyn Devine worked tirelessly to ensure that the large number of posts from the U.S. and Europe had coordinated efforts. Roy



Trade Commissioner Denis Trottier (left) from Paris participates in the matchmaking program with foreign buyers and Canadian companies at Greenbuild 2011.

photo: Renée Rietveld/Canada Green Building Council