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partnership with all levels of government. For example, we're expanding our Program for Export Market Development to extend support to municipalities and non-profit, public-private partnerships working at the local level to attract new foreign direct investment to their communities.

CanadExport: The Year 2000 bug, better known as Y2K, is a top priority for everyone. As Minister for International Trade, what advice can you give the private sector, particularly exporters, in this regard?

Minister: I'd advise all Canadians that are working internationally to take the Y2K issue very seriously — in a practical business sense. Businesses should make sure that their suppliers and customers outside Canada are Y2K-ready, and to create contingency plans just in case there are difficulties in other countries. Our Department is currently gathering information on how our major trading partners are dealing with the issue. We're also working with our trade offices abroad to ensure, to the highest degree possible, that Canadian businesses and citizens are protected should problems arise.

CanadExport: What are you and the Department doing to help small and medium-sized enterprises succeed in foreign markets?

Minister: The Department offers assistance to SMEs in more than 100 offices abroad. We currently have about 320 Canadian trade commissioners posted outside Canada in cities throughout the world who work alongside some 300 locally hired sector specialists. They are well equipped to offer SMEs the information and assistance they need to go "global." We've also established a new division in my Department dedicated to these smaller exporters, which has already put into place an on-line missions network that provides training to companies going out on various missions, as well as an SME Task Force with strong private-sector participation. And, we've put a great deal of effort into assisting special exporting groups, particularly women, native and young entrepreneurs.

CanadExport: Do you have any advice to pass on to the business community when contacting our trade offices abroad?

Minister: Just that you can save a lot of time and money by preparing

for the challenges of international business in Canada before venturing into foreign markets. The first thing a company should do is get in touch with Team Canada Inc. It's as easy as calling 1-888-811-1119, or visiting the Web site at exportsource.gc.ca

CanadExport: Do you know at this time where the next Team Canada trade mission will be, and do you think these missions will continue in the years ahead?

Minister: As you know, the Team Canada trade missions led by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, with the provincial and territorial leaders, have been highly successful. Through these missions, over 1,500 Canadian exporters have concluded more than 800 deals valued at \$24 billion. The mission to Latin America last January attracted over 500 businesspeople, the majority from smaller companies or companies new to the region. So, we'd be foolish to ignore this type of response and success. As for the exact destination and time of the next mission, this is now being discussed with our provincial counterparts and other key participants.

CanadExport: Thank you, Minister.

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tel.: 1-888-811-1119. Established exporters interested in Poland — or information on local Canada-Poland Chambers of Commerce — can contact their International Trade Centre (ITC); or Dan Mrkich, Central Europe Division, DFAIT, tel.: (613) 992-1449,

fax: (613) 995-8756; or for targeted marketing activities in Poland, they may contact directly the Trade Section at the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, tel.: (011-48-22) 29-80-51, fax: (011-48-22) 29-64-57, e-mail: wsaw.td@wsa01.x400.gc.ca