

BUSINESS TRAVEL

External Affairs and International Trade Canada in conjunction with the Bank of Montreal and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency have commissioned a basic primer to assist Canadian firms pursue business in Mexico. *PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS* covers not only the opportunities, but the challenges associated with those opportunities. The handbook includes a few brief sections dealing with important considerations for Canadian businessmen travelling to Mexico which are provided below.

Visas

A tourist card in a valid passport does not entitle the foreign visitor to carry on business operations. Visitors who plan to do business in Mexico should enter the country on a non-immigrant visa as an employee of a company, or as a self-employed individual. Those travelling on tourist visas are not allowed to receive remuneration from Mexican sources. Visas are readily obtained from Mexican consulates throughout the world.

Currency

As of January 1, 1993, Mexico has a new monetary unit called the "*Nuevo Peso*" (N\$), or "New Peso". The value of a New Peso is equal to one thousand old Pesos, and is divided into one hundred cents (¢). The old circulating banknotes and coins continue to be used along with the new banknotes and coins. The New Peso banknotes have the same designs and colours as those of equivalent value previously in use. The only difference is that New Peso banknotes have different denominations. The new coins have different designs, and are smaller, and more practical than the old coins. The New Peso is meant to facilitate monetary transactions. With its decimal point three places to the left, the New Peso will make commercial transactions and calculations simpler. Another benefit is that amounts in New Pesos will use less space in computer systems and on forms.

All major credit cards are accepted throughout Mexico's business and tourist areas. Money can be changed at a bank or at an exchange house (*Casa de Cambio*) where the rate is often better. Many banks are willing to cash travellers' cheques without a fee, while others may charge 1.0 percent of the value of the cheques. As of late 1991, devaluation against the dollar was halved from 40 centavos to 20 centavos in any given day, ending speculation about further changes to exchange rate policy. The abolition of exchange controls means that Mexico now only has one exchange rate.

Shopping

Mexico has a value-added tax (IVA) similar to the Canadian GST. As in Canada, some establishments include this tax in their prices, others do not but it will appear as a separate item on your final bill. Occasionally, all prices in a list such as a menu may be reduced by a certain percentage to conform to anti-inflation regulations. In some cases, prices are not listed on items such as souvenirs. This is an invitation to bargain and you may be able to negotiate your way down to about half of the original asking price. It is customary to tip waiters (5-15 percent), barbers or hairdressers (15 percent), and tourist guides (10 percent), though not taxi drivers.

Taxis

You are well advised to take taxis, particularly when visiting Mexico City. With its population of 20