

## After the Fiesta

# EXPORTERS REFLECT ON CANADA EXPO '94

Most of the exhibitors at CANADA EXPO in Mexico City this past March seemed to be having a grand time — working hard, yes, but enjoying the buzz that comes from taking part in a high-profile, well-attended event in a new and somewhat exotic market. A few took some time out to visit local beauty spots before or after the show, but the intense activity inside

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the Exhibimex site was a result of preparation, focussed work and a lot of good will and healthy curiosity.

After returning from CANADA EXPO, a number of exhibitors reflected on the show and its value.

"The Government of Canada did a heck of a good job," said Joseph Lipsett, President of **Compustep**, a company that produces large part machines in Peterborough, Ontario. "It was well organized, and well supported. It got a very good draw. We met some people, and for us it had a positive marketing result."

Mr. Lipsett, making his first visit to Mexico, ran up against some cultural difference. He found that in Mexico, people with whom he had appointments were often late or did not show up at all, but granted that some of this may have been due to the confusion after the assassination of Presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, which occurred midway through the trade show. But, he said, "Canada Expo produced some contacts we'll follow in the future, and two or three that may generate business."

Compustep made a contact for dis-

tribution of its products during CANADA EXPO, and as the company is considering entering the Argentinian and Chilean markets, this seems a successful outcome from their week in Mexico.

"We also had a week in which we were side by side with other Canadian business people. There was a good deal of networking and learning about the market. We may have some mutual business deals in Canada with four other Canadian companies."

Paul Mann, President of **National Connect** of Vancouver, also had a good CANADA EXPO. "I was very impressed with the logistics and the set-up, the way the movement of people was organized," he said.

Mr. Mann describes National Connect as a "corporate dating service. We're an information brokerage. We put companies together — find suppliers, manufacturers, whatever, in Indonesia, Venezuela or worldwide that you are looking for."

"We'll certainly be doing anything else like CANADA EXPO that comes along," Mr. Mann said. "The quality of people we wanted to see was definitely there. We have set up agents and opened up offices. There have been faxes galore."

Jay Charendoff, an architect who is the Latin American representative for **Yeadon, Ltd.**, based in Guelph, Ontario, thought "it was quite excellent." The firm makes air-supported prefabricated buildings and ships them to the end users.

"I was there with a product that most Mexicans have no clue about," he said afterward. "People were fascinated that a building of that large size could be pre-fabbed and inflated by air pressure."

He used a video presentation to introduce the wonders of the product and "made some excellent contacts." Since returning to Canada,

he has had requests from 10 different end users, examining the product's viability for everything from warehouses to pool covers. "I'm now pulling together the prices for these inquiries," he said recently.

NAFTA has made life somewhat simpler for Yeadon. "Applicable tariffs were heavy before — about 80 per cent. They are now approximately 25 per cent. There was no point in us looking at that market before. But Mexican businesses like leading edge products, and some companies looking to replace warehousing see our product as that. Also, the environmental considerations in firms that produce dust and noise are looking for ways to mitigate the problem — these buildings have simple ways to do this. NAFTA has made us price-competitive."

Corporate Development Director Glenn Peckover came to Mexico City representing **Northland Superior Supply Company Ltd.**, part of a larger company,

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Daycon, based in Winnipeg. Northland manufactures grain cleaning equipment.

"It was my first, and our first, time in Mexico," he says. "We were attracted by the government initiative, and intrigued by the possibilities NAFTA held out — we are interested in the international development of our business."

Mr. Peckover is a recent addition to his company, and brought to it an interest in exporting. "What the government set up for us was excellent,"

Continued on Page III — **Exporters**

# MEXICAN OPPORTUNITIES ONLINE

The **Open Bidding Service** (OBS) from Information Systems Management Corporation is a national electronic service offering businesses current and complete information about procurement opportunities.

As of April 1, 1994, OBS has entered a contractual agreement with DFAIT for a one-year pilot. The OBS collects Mexican NAFTA procurement requirements, translates them from Spanish to English and French and posts the notices in the OBS. The primary source of the procurement opportunities is the Mexican business daily, *El Diario*. By the end of April, 30 notices were already posted out of Mexico. Time between publication in *El Diario* and translated appearance on the OBS is two days.

All that is needed to have access to this service is

a computer with a modem. The subscriber receives procurement notices from over 20 Canadian federal departments, including Government Services, the Province of Alberta, and the U.S. *Commerce Business Daily*. Other services include, but are not limited to, an online service from eight Canadian newspapers, a Bid Matching Service that will search the database for opportunities matching a company's profile, and an historical database of past procurement notices and awards.

Annual subscription fee is \$130, and online charges, from anywhere in Canada, are 42 cents per minute. Spokesperson Derek Peper says the programs are extremely user-friendly, requiring minimal computer expertise.

For more information, or to register with OBS, call 1-800-361-4620 (Ottawa area 613-737-3374).

## Exporters — from page II

he says. "We learned a lot about the Mexican environment, talked to a few people, and I came back with a list of people with whom I will be in correspondence. Our current priorities are domestic, but it was a chance to assess what is down there. The market opportunity is different there — it would need product re-development in many instances."

Mr. Peckover felt that "the government did us a favour — by the logistical arrangements, the information, the briefing. Arranging the hotel, the transportation — all that helped."

His one reservation is that, because it was a mixed trade fair rather than an industry-specific one, the proportion of people to whom he passed his card and literature might not have been very well-focussed. But he did see the value of a high-profile show. While Northland's export venture may be on the back burner for a while, he expects to absorb what he has learned for future ventures in that direction.

Glenn Smith, President of **Cygnus**

**Technology Ltd.**, an electronics service specialist in Fredericton, N.B., said afterward that it had been a problem "getting the equipment there and back." His display material arrived in the nick of time, but as of mid-May had yet to be returned. Feeling certain his paperwork had been in order, he was critical of Mexican customs and the freight forwarder engaged to transship Canadian products.

"But that was the only negative thing," he said later. "Considering

the bureaucracies involved, it was great — incredibly good. We had lots of inquiries, and some hot, hot, hot leads. We have people we're working with, and we are going to be following things up."

Smith is a firm believer in exploring the opportunities offered by exporting. "It's new money," he said during Canada Expo. "It's not just recirculated money out of the common stock. Canadian business people have got to realize that it's the only way."

## • NEW PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE •

*The Access North America Program has recently produced two new publications of interest to exporters.*

*The New North America: Opportunities for Canadians (349LB) deals with what's in store now the NAFTA has come into force, as well as how to prepare for and to take advantage of the widening trade horizons in the United States and Mexico.*

*Where to Find...: Info Sources for the Mexican Market (348LA) provides a comprehensive guide to gathering current and accurate information on doing business in Mexico.*

*Both are available from InfoEx, 1-800-267-8376 (Ottawa area 944-4000).*