

The Team Canada partnership will step up personal contact with the private sector by assigning "account executives" to individual firms. These officers will come from a number of federal and provincial organizations ie Industry Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec, Western Economic Diversification, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, National Research Council, the Business Development Bank, provincial trade departments, and municipal governments, as well as regional economic development offices.

The account executives will provide an enhanced level of service to a portfolio of companies and will establish repeated one-on-one contacts with targeted clients. They will actively provide encouragement and advice on exporting. They will also help steer clients to all trade services, including exporter preparation programs and market information / intelligence sources.

As part of this strategy, trade commissioners are increasing their SME networking. Their task is to provide SME contacts at industry shows (ExportVision) and in one-on-one meetings (OutReach) with market intelligence that compel the company to seriously consider the pursuit of market leads in export markets. Fresh from markets abroad, trade commissioners have high credibility with Canadian firms and can exert a major influence on their decisions to enter foreign markets.

Since May of 1996, 57 trade commissioners have visited nearly 300 SMEs in 25 Canadian cities. As a result of one recent outreach effort in Montreal in July, for example, Trade Commissioners from the Canadian Embassy in Sao Paulo will be leading an incoming mission of 45 buyers to attend a forestry show in Quebec City in October.

In addition, existing government IBD services are already focussed on SME's needs, and guiding "new entrants" through the steps required to become successful in international markets. For example, "NEXPRO", the New Exporters Training and Counselling Program, delivered by the Business Development Bank of Canada is a successful program to prepare new companies to export. NEXPRO is designed for owners and managers of small and medium-sized companies with export potential, but who lack the exporting knowledge and experience to proceed with confidence. NEXPRO helps entrepreneurs broaden their knowledge of the export process, develop a realistic export plan and implement their own export strategy. In addition to group workshops and discussions, NEXPRO provides the SME with 40 hours of personalized counselling. Alternatively, Western Economic Diversification's International Trade Personnel Program, offers support for SMEs ready to export for the first time, by assisting with the expenses of hiring recent post-secondary graduates to develop export sales.

To allow SMEs to get "hands on" international business experience, "NEBS" (new exporters to border states) and "NEXOS" (new exporters to overseas), were designed. "NEBS" does not require any previous export experience, and is designed as a first step for potential SME exporters. Participation is not limited to a specific level of sales or by other financial criteria. "NEXOS" is also intended as export preparation, however it is targeted at SMEs which are one step further along in their development. These SMEs are likely to have demonstrated a sustained and successful marketing effort to the USA or other countries over a number of years, but will be new to the target market overseas.

Once SMEs have developed the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct business in international markets, further government IBD programs and services assist export ready companies with export financing, market information and intelligence, strategic alliances, and technology and investment acquisition.

- The government's principal role is to stimulate and facilitate, not to subsidize;

The earlier outline of the government's roles clearly demonstrates that these actions are undertaken to stimulate and facilitate the private sector's IBD initiatives. Government does not subsidize, but will engage in risk-sharing with SMEs to further stimulate their activities. This principle was recognized in the government's IBD initiative of Common Program Guidelines for all federal departments. The Common Program Guidelines acknowledged that the private sector had recommended that government resources available to support individual firms should be focused, above all, on smaller companies,