

The X-Port Files



by Scott Shepherd, President and Chief Executive Officer, NORTHSTAR Trade Finance Inc.

The SME export finance edge

There is a story about two girls who were out hiking in my home province, British Columbia.

They were crossing a brook when a frog jumped out of the water and said, "Kiss me and I'll turn into an export banker."

One girl promptly picked up the frog and threw him into her knapsack.

"Aren't you going to kiss him?" the other girl said.

"Are you kidding?" the first said. "Export bankers are a dime a dozen. But a talking frog will fetch millions in the export market."

I am not sure that we export bankers actually do go for as little as that. I do believe taking the time to familiarize yourself with export finance can be the best investment you'll ever make.

I'd like to cast some light on the subject from my vantage point as someone who runs a small business myself, one which happens to be focused on assisting new and growing Canadian exporters by financing their buyers abroad.

NORTHSTAR Trade Finance only has a couple of dozen employees. But as a team we have impact beyond our numbers. That comes from having established close working relationships with some very major banks, Bank of Montreal, Royal Bank of Canada, and HSBC Bank Canada. And on February 15, National Bank of Canada added its name to the roster of our supporters. Together, these institutions provide us with over \$300 million of capital to assist entrepreneurs with a global vision.

At any given moment, NORTHSTAR has credit extended to companies in

countries that can range from Chile to China to Iceland, and points in between.



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That means we are involved in a wide range of business relationships, and economic situations. Each and every one is different. And yet there are some universal lessons to be learned from them that I believe are of interest to *CanadExport* readers.

In the months to come, I will be giving you my export banker's take on several key

trends and developments. I'll be tackling topics such as the review of the Export Development Corporation's mandate currently being examined by a Senate committee. I'll take a look at what to make of burgeoning

prospects worldwide when Canada's exports are focused more than ever on the U.S., and how to take advantage of new electronic commerce options available to exporters.

I will also be examining some broader subjects, like how to position your company in the export finance cycle, and what a small exporter needs to know to work smoothly with large lenders.

There is a lot to discuss. In all, Canada's banks provided \$66 billion of credit facilities to exporters in 1996. Credit unions also provide a range of export financing options, and insurance groups, factoring companies and government agencies also have key roles to play.

All these players put any number of other choices on the exporter's menu.

Not to fear! All of this can be made palatable, and I'll be back soon with a few choice morsels to digest.

In the meantime, please contact me with queries or comments at s.shepherd@northstar.ca Internet: www.northstar.ca ✪

Information and Communication Technology Opportunities in Norway

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tunities for data-warehousing solutions, E-Commerce, and Linux application products.

Due to the topography and the great distances, distribution in Norway is much more costly than in the other Nordic countries. Largest distributors are CHS Electronics, Ingram Micro, Computer 2000, Getronics, Actebis, and Merkantidata (Norway).

It is very easy for Canadian companies to do business in Norway. English is widely used, and market is easy with minimum of red tape. Norwegians are very straight forward and

direct in their business dealings.

Canadian market leaders like Cognos, Corel, Newbridge and Nortel Networks have their own offices in Norway. Numerous other Canadian companies are selling through their agents and distributors.

For more information on opportunities, contact Bjorn J. Hanssen, Business Development Officer, Canadian Embassy, Oslo, tel.: (011-47) 22 99 53 00, fax: (011-47) 22 99 53 01, e-mail: bjorn.hanssen@dfait-maeci.gc.ca ✪