

Diversity in Action

By Campbell Morrison

Around the globe, trade commissioners are offering innovative ways to assist Canadian business. Whether it is by exporting Canadian breeding swine to China or by creating the Auto Task Force to help Canadian auto suppliers establish a footprint in Mexico, trade commissioners are on the front line of promoting the widely diversified products and services of Canadian industry.

The sun never sets on the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS). Every day, in markets around the globe, the TCS is promoting Canadian business and helping to make Canada a wealthier and more prosperous nation.

“The TCS is designed to be flexible and nimble so it can meet the needs of its clients, whatever they do and wherever they are,” says Chief Trade Commissioner Peter McGovern. “Its activities are as diverse as the clients it serves.”

Canadian exports of pork are well known, but less known are the country’s exports of breeding swine to the enormous and growing Chinese market. This year, 670 live purebred swine are heading to China, thanks in part to the foresight and perseverance of Wang Pei, a trade commissioner based in Beijing, who saw an opportunity for the Canadian industry back in 2008—and continued to pursue it even during the H1N1 flu scare, when China closed its doors to imports of live swine.

“Although I have not been directly involved in the swine-breeding business before, I was happy to contribute to a group effort with colleagues in Chongqing, Shanghai and Ganzu,” says Pei. “We introduced officials from the Canadian industry to officials from the China National Oils, Foodstuffs and Cereals Corporation, or COFCO, which has created what may be a long-term relationship.”

Similarly, Chongqing-based trade commissioner William Zhao capitalized on an opportunity to put a Canadian firm in the service of Chinese priorities.

With a large number of energy-inefficient companies, China began in 2010 to promote “energy performance contracting,” a model by which companies become more energy-efficient and reap financial and environmental benefits. Zhao contacted a number of Canadian firms that are well advanced in the field, eventually bringing Quebec-based Ecosystem into the Chinese marketplace. Zhao and Ecosystem identified Jiehua Chemical, a major supplier to the peroxide industry with assets of close to \$1 billion, as a potential partner. Ecosystem showed Jiehua how to become more efficient, and the company is now burning less coal and reducing its carbon footprint. Ecosystem, a first-time TCS client, is now looking for more partners in China.

“Anticipation is a big part of business success, and our presence in Chongqing allowed a Canadian company to get its foot in the door,” says Zhao.

In Mexico, Trade Commissioner David Valle applied an innovative approach to one of Canada’s most important industries—the automotive sector. In 2010, Valle spearheaded the creation of the Auto Task Force (ATF), an initiative aimed at strengthening the presence of Canada’s auto suppliers in Mexico’s growing auto industry. The voice of the Canadian industry in

Mexico, ATF now has 11 members, including Magna, WMG, Linamar, Laing, The Woodbridge Group, Martinrea and Platinum Tool.

“These Canadian companies are playing key roles in Mexico’s expanding auto sector,” said Valle. “Our role at the TCS was to bring all these players together, along with governments, and get them to help each other and learn from each other. Moreover, the ATF will serve as a source of advice and support for newcomers who are planning to establish a presence in Mexico. Prospects for Canadian firms are excellent here.”



Trade commissioner Detlef Engler (right) helps Canadian business succeed at the Internationale Zuliefererbörse trade fair in Wolfsburg, Germany.

The auto sector is also a focus of trade commissioners in Germany, where the Volkswagen Group, under the moniker “Mach 18,” has publicly stated its goal of surpassing Toyota as the world’s largest auto company by 2018. A key part of Mach 18’s plan is to increase its sales and market share in North America by expanding its assembly capacity and using local parts suppliers. Trade commissioners Cliff Singleton in Munich, and Detlef Engler and Bruno Wiest in Berlin, convinced Mach 18 to have Canada as a partner country at their in-house suppliers’ trade fair, Internationale Zuliefererbörse, in