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CANADIAN COMPANIES GO TO MARKET

MEXICO CITY – The Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Mexico sent a strong message to the people of both their countries when, as Mexico confronted the horror of an assassination, while still in the midst of an ongoing political crisis, they declared that the show must go on. Canada's largest-ever trade show, *Canada Expo 94*, saw 430 Canadian companies and about 600 exhibitors in Mexico City's huge Exhibimex to seek markets for an impressive variety of Canadian products and services. The hall was a true demonstration of Canadian ingenuity, application and enterprise.

The thousands of Mexicans who came to visit were introduced to products ranging from delicate bottles of perfume to huge industrial saws, from displays featuring tourism, education opportunities and transportation options to tables where visitors could taste smoked salmon, fresh spring water, cheese or french fries. (The latter, and related, booths were very popular, given the long lineups at the busy snack bar).

Exhibitors came from all over the country, from a cross-section of age groups, businesses and experience. There was a tremendous energy inside the hall from March 22-25, an electric atmosphere of activity, innovation, curiosity and exchange.

Exporters from Canada had vari-

ous reflections on the largest trade mission this country has ever mounted. Their tangible achievements throughout the show varied, but many said that they found it an invaluable experience. A few felt it was not the right venue for them or their businesses, at least at this particular moment, but did not express regret at having learned that on-site.

Martin Lavoie, of *Canada Pure Water Company, Ltd.* of Weston, had a successful *Canada Expo*. "We had walk-in interest because of the show," he said. The company attends many trade shows in the United States and Mexico, but at *Expo* entered "the biggest deal we've ever struck besides in the U.S." As a manufacturer of carbonated beverages, Canada Pure is considering licensing out, and is "looking to be able to provide turnkey operations" in the foreseeable future.

A company with no previous experience in Mexico, *Breakwater Books Ltd.* of St. John's, also stimulated "a tremendous amount of interest" in Mexico, according to its President, Clyde Rose. Breakwater produces books aimed at the Canadian school system, but also, in partnership with *IDON Corporation*, makes a program known as "Softwaves", which offers "electronic courseware technology." Mr. Rose was in Mexico basically to introduce the product: "We are selling a technology that can be designed to fit their own edu-

cational programs; it's a way to uplift technological standards." Before the show, he had sent out lots of brochures, catalogues, faxes, in order to set the ground for anticipated meetings with interested Mexicans. "Several more appointments were made on-site," he said, and he achieved part of his main strategic objective in coming to Mexico: "to establish a contact. So much will depend on that."

Les Parfums Simon Chang of Montreal also had a successful show. "We are on target here — we have made contact with all three major department store chains," said their representative, Alain Quintal. "We have good leads as a result of *Canada Expo*, and we will be starting to build up a demonstration network in late spring and summer. We will be going for direct sales by October and November, in time for the Christmas trade." The Chang booth was another popular one, with visitors attracted by the chance to be sprayed with Chang's upmarket scent, *Kimono* — or to take away an attractive sample in an eye-catching bag.

Dawn Sullivan of *Med-I-Pant* in Toronto had a different reaction to the trade show. Her company produces products for incontinent patients in hospitals, and basically has 85% of the Canadian market, as well as many U.S. customers, so it is

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