

## **Helping Ontario Firms Expand Internationally**

As Ontario adjusts to a new economic climate, influenced by a strong Canadian dollar, high oil and energy prices, a weakening US trading partner, and intensifying global competition, the importance of a strategy of diversification and export is becoming increasingly clear.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce believes that government and the business community have a responsibility to foster an export culture. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) have difficulty finding the resources to expand to new markets, and yet, SMEs who export have often been found to out-perform their non-exporting counterparts across a variety of success indicators.

In many countries in the world, and in fact in other provinces in Canada, assistance is available for companies that need help to grow their business in international markets. Now, as a result of a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Government of Ontario, firms in Ontario also have access to this kind of support.

Export Market Access (EMA) will enhance Ontario's performance in international markets by helping new and emerging exporters access new markets and expand their growth. EMA will also lead to more employment opportunities for Ontario's highly skilled workforce at a time when the job market is undergoing a significant transition. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are vital to Ontario's job creation, accounting for roughly 99% of Ontario's business community and employing about 53% of its workers.

EMA is a program that will increase export sales by helping to defray the costs of initiatives that companies could not or would not undertake without help. It's aimed at companies in Ontario with no or negligible export sales and preference will be given to a broad range of target markets which are not necessarily in the US. The program is not limited to members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Similar programs have been successful in improving regional economic performance in such countries as Britain, Australia, and the United States.

Assistance will be provided in four different categories: direct contact (which includes outgoing and incoming missions, and exhibiting goods and services to potential international buyers or suppliers); marketing tools; market research; and foreign bidding projects.

EMA coincides with efforts by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to promote greater business connections between companies in Ontario and emerging markets like India and the Asia-Pacific region.

Just last month the OCC released a report pointing to the opportunities for Ontario firms in helping India overcome its infrastructure deficit. With immense needs in India in terms of hard and soft infrastructure, and Ontario's essential strengths in these areas, *Ontario-India Relations: The*

*Infrastructure Dimension* argues that infrastructure is a key point of access into this burgeoning economy.

Similarly, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is working closely with several Hong Kong groups including The Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, to provide information and market intelligence to Ontario companies who see the benefits of launching a China strategy from Hong Kong as their base. One of the first initiatives within this partnership is an online dialogue or blog promoting two-way trade between the two regions. It can be found at [www.venturesdialogue.ca](http://www.venturesdialogue.ca)

While these are just two markets, they represent unlimited opportunities for Ontario firms. With additional support and cost-sharing, it's hoped that greater penetration of these and other markets by companies from Ontario, will serve to strengthen Ontario's prosperity and job creation. More information about Export Market Access can be found at [www.exportaccess.ca](http://www.exportaccess.ca).