

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.

As part of the Government of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) has invested \$1.6 million dollars in Export Market Access (EMA), a program operated by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Started in July 2008 with the support of the Government of Ontario, EMA has already provided \$2 million to over 200 Ontario companies as they have ventured into foreign markets. These companies operate in a variety of sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, professional and technical services, marketing, wholesale trade and culture.

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

Assistance is 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.

Applications are processed on a continuous intake basis and many more applications are currently being reviewed. Funding decisions are made within 30 business days upon receipt of fully completed applications. The online application and information regarding eligibility criteria can be found at exportaccess.ca.