What others are saying about Alberta’s international efforts

Lee Townsend co-owns the family-run TPLR Honey Farms Ltd. in Stony Plain, Alberta:

In 2009 we were introduced to a number of honey buyers from Japan, all of which now purchase honey from us. We put on seminars in 2010 and again in 2012 with the New West Partnership (an economic partnership between Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan). All of this was arranged and organized by the Alberta government and the Alberta Japan Office.

The hospitality we were shown while in Japan was unbelievable, and we felt it was very important to reciprocate when Japanese buyers visited Alberta. We have taken them on tours to Jasper as well as showing them the sights around the Capital region. This has only strengthened the relationship with our customers, and it is something that no other supplier in Alberta has done for their Japanese customers.

We operate 3,500 bee colonies, and our business model is perfect for the Japanese market. It’s a point of pride for us to say we supply honey to Japan. One of our customers in Japan has recently launched a private label package with our image on it, which is something that has never happened before for any supplier from any country in the Japanese market.

Ward Toma is general manager of the Alberta Canola Producers. The canola industry contributes $5 billion a year to the Alberta economy:

Alberta’s international strategy has been important to the canola producers from the beginning. Twenty years ago in Japan, the government helped our industry move forward in meeting customer needs and creating demand. From what I’ve seen of the new international strategy, I think they are on the right track with increased presence in Asia and the U.S. Midwest and re-engagement with a new Managing Director in Germany. These are all important markets for canola and for Alberta agriculture in general. In Europe, where they use bio-diesel and other bio-fuels, there are technical issues to address. The Midwest U.S. is the heart of a large potential market for canola meal and Asia is our closest off-shore market. It must be attended to.
Husam Kinawi, PH.D., is co-founder and chief scientist of Wedge Networks Inc., an internet security company. He attended the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona as part of the government-sponsored Alberta Pavilion which showcased Alberta’s mobile technology and application companies:

If we were to attend this trade show on our own, it would be impossible for us to: a) manage the logistics of setting up for such an event; b) afford it simply because the show is very expensive; and c) get the same ‘soft’ benefits the Pavilion afforded us, which made all the difference.

The mere presence of the Alberta Pavilion attracted other companies wanting to know what is happening in this part of the world. Alberta Government staff even matched us to interested companies which saved us time and effort. Case in point: a French security company hunted us down through the staff’s good services and I am hoping to close a major partnership with them.

We found the staff commitment and dedication invaluable. I will be forever indebted to a staff member for ‘texting’ me when I had the Chief Technology Officer of IBM arriving early, while I was in another meeting. We are also hoping to develop our business with them.

Lisa Skierka is general manager of the Alberta Barley Commission. Each year, Alberta farmers produce more than five million tonnes of barley, about half of Canada’s annual crop:

The New West Partnership (Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan) trade mission to China, Japan and South Korea provided an excellent opportunity to reach out to new and existing markets about the value of Canadian barley. We have had real interest that was a direct result of that mission.

Working with the Alberta government on trade initiatives provides real value for Alberta’s barley industry. Traveling on a government trade mission raises our profile and opens doors. Knowing that agriculture is a part of the Government of Alberta’s trade priorities is important to our farmers and our industry.
Joel Ward is president of Red Deer College. The College delivers programs that prepare students for an international marketplace. It also targets foreign students for study at the college. The College will be launching an international post-degree business program in the fall of 2014:

This program will assist local businesses to grow and expand internationally. The students will take courses in cultural awareness, second languages, international marketing and others. A four-month international posting completes the program, making graduates job-ready.

The provincial government’s focus on diversification and expanding markets beyond the U.S. fits very nicely with our efforts at the College. The government’s strategy will help to diversify our economy, create new partnerships and markets, and enable students to expand their knowledge and participation in an ever growing world economy.

Martin Grace is vice president of sales for Triton Global Business Services, a Calgary-based company focused on services for alternative payment providers and digital merchants. The company attended the Mobile World Congress:

The Government of Alberta and the Canadian Trade Commission provided unprecedented access to companies we have been targeting. It would have taken interminable time for us to connect with them directly. This access resulted in solid business engagement with these companies and accelerated dramatically our paths to market.

The economic value attributed to our participation at the Mobile World Congress is substantial – we estimate in the many millions of dollars. This Alberta company is grateful and appreciative of our province and its team (at the Alberta Pavilion). This type of practical assistance is what small- and medium-sized technology companies such as Triton Global need. It’s simple, common-sense support that is required, in our view. Being market-ready is one thing but the execution is something entirely different and that is the government’s key contribution.

Matthew Cornall is an investment attraction officer with Central Alberta: Access Prosperity, representing a trade area of 275,000 in over 40 municipalities:

We have very close ties with the Government of Alberta through the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations. They have been very helpful providing advice and expertise and connecting us with companies.

For example, a small Portuguese general contractor and stone mason is interested in locating in Alberta. International and Intergovernmental Relations helped with their arrangements to come to Central Alberta, where Access Prosperity put together a program to connect them with local home builders, land developers and the local home building and construction associations. We worked closely with International and Intergovernmental Relations to design this program to make sure it targeted the Portuguese company’s needs.

Recently, a Chinese energy company visited our area. They brought their Chairman, Presidents, CEO and CFO. Minister Cal Dallas hosted a lunch for the group at Red Deer City Hall. For the Chinese, a culture focused on protocol, it is important to go to the seat of power. Having the minister there was huge.
Janaka Ruwanpura is vice-provost (international) at the University of Calgary. The university is involved in a broad range of international activities including student recruitment, student international experience, research activity, program and course offerings, and international development work:

Internationalization is a top priority to ensure the university’s future success. This year, we launched our own international strategy to establish the university as a Global Intellectual Hub. This includes two targets to increase international student enrolment and enhance international student experience. The University of Calgary will explore strategic but sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships in research and education focused on six countries of emphasis and 13 counties of interests.

The province of Alberta has supported our international initiatives by involving us in official visits, supporting our missions to other countries, and by assisting in the development and implementation of programs to increase student mobility. We see alignment in the province’s international strategy with our own and look forward to a continued and mutually-beneficial relationship in the future.

Peter Ng is president of KORE Real Estate Group in Calgary:

We went on the China trade mission. It was a good platform to meet people. We did a presentation at the Hong Kong stock exchange, a symposium on investment in Alberta. Small- and medium-sized enterprises don’t have credibility there. We need the introduction services. The Alberta representative was really helpful: he got us contact names and gave us advice.

Chris Goodall is CEO & CTO of Trusted Positioning Inc, a Calgary technology company focused on navigation systems:

We’ve been in business since 2010. We do trade shows and customer visits all over the world since our customers are cell phone vendors. Nearly all of our customers are international. We participated in an International Science and Technology Program in China. We were at the Taipei trade show, attended by 120,000, at the Canada booth. We were at the Canada/Alberta booth at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. It’s all about marketing, a connection with our customers. The province subsidizes the costs of the booths. I know it’s great for small- and medium-sized enterprises – I see many of them at the shows.

http://www.albertacanada.com/