

Canada seeks Inland alliances

TRADE: The country's consul general promotes partnerships with local businesses.

07:48 PM PDT on Thursday, May 8, 2008

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The Press-Enterprise

Inland businesses would be wise to gaze north to its Canadian neighbors when seeking trade partners and making sure that the Pacific supply chain flows smoothly, said Alain Dudoit, Canada's consul general.

In 2006, California imported \$21.2 billion in goods from Canada, most of it automobiles, and exported a little more than \$10.5 billion, mainly agricultural products.

But a Canada-wide focus on new technologies and improved logistics could involve partnerships with Inland-area businesses, Dudoit said in a telephone interview from Los Angeles.

"The scope for partnerships in this area is very, very significant," Dudoit said.

Dudoit was scheduled to speak to Inland business leaders Thursday night to help launch World Trade Month in the two-county region.

Riverside County owes about 1,400 of its jobs to trade relationships with Canada, "which is not insignificant," Dudoit said.

Several companies, including Corona-based Lucas Oil and Duct-O-Wire, which makes construction-equipment components, have operations both locally and to the north.

Dudoit was quick to point out that Canada bought \$248 billion worth of goods from the United States last year, compared to \$56 billion spent by China.

But Canadian trade with the U.S. and within California remains dependent on a bottleneck free border that doesn't sacrifice security.

"We see emerging a number of nonsecurity-related measures that have to do with tariffs and fees," he said, which slows trade in both directions. "Those temporary disruptions at the border are very worrisome."

San Bernardino County and the city of Riverside joined last year to focus on global trade with about four events in May.

This year, the number of events held across the Inland region has doubled, said Nathan Freeman, Riverside's

economic development coordinator.

"Certainly the economy is what it is," Freeman said. But in light of the falling worth of the dollar, the timing has never been better for foreign investors to look at the Inland region, he said.

The region's focus on global trade continues today at an 11 a.m. luncheon at the Marriott Riverside featuring Garrett Ashley, California's undersecretary of international trade, and Jon D. Haveman, founding partner of Beacon Economics.

"With the Internet, everybody is looking globally now," said Cindy Roth, president of the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce.

Roth said the month is designed to educate area entrepreneurs on how they can connect to international investment.

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