

Ireland Inc. is proud to report an increase of 22% in trade from Ireland to Canada for 2010. The underlying story behind the figure is naturally complex but highlights the positive nature of the Canadian market for Irish based companies. The strength of the Canadian economy in the face of a global downturn, the ease of doing business and the matching of the Irish supply base to demand are contributing factors.

Enterprise Ireland works with indigenous Irish companies that are exploring and seeking opportunities in the Canadian market. These companies come from a range of sectors such as software, life sciences and machinery equipment. Some of the success stories to date include Curam Software, who provide Social Enterprise Management software to Canadian authorities, Advanced Innovations who supply mobile handsets to Public Mobile and Multi Hog providing sweeping machinery across Canada.

6-8 Irish companies are setting up in Canada every year, and Enterprise Ireland works with over 100 companies at any time in developing their go to market strategies for Canada. Canada serves as an ideal gateway for Irish companies into North America. Despite its vastness Canada is a relatively compact and less fragmented market than the US. There is a similar culture in Canada, it is a mix between North American and European, and the strong Quebec connection makes it easier for European companies breaking into the market. In Canada building strong business relationships is essential, and though lead times are long (and there is a tough due diligence process), once a company secures a client they are likely to be doing business in Canada for a long time to come. Canadian companies tend to follow suit, so with one reference site secured it is not unusual that the Irish company can easily secure other Canadian customers. Canada can be a less daunting market for companies to tackle than their big neighbour and serves as a useful training ground for companies wanting to sell into the US.

Key to developing the market is gaining an understanding of the local market place, competitive pressures and as a result what to emphasise as a unique selling point or value proposition. The Irish Diaspora (13% of Canadians claim Irish ancestry) is keen to engage with Irish companies and a vibrant network of Irish Chambers of Commerce exists across Canada. These contacts have been an excellent source of advice and introductions for visiting companies.

Why Canada

- Ireland is the fourth largest receiver of Canadian FDI
- Approx. 55 Irish companies have a base in Canada employing 5,500 Canadians
- Canada has the 2nd largest oil reserves in the world
- Buoyant construction sector
- Strong financial institutions

Ross O'Colmain
Enterprise Ireland Country Manager,
Canada.