NH Businesses Reach Out To Canadian Manufacturers

Kathy McCormack, Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — North Country business owners traveled Wednesday on a north-of-the-border trip to recruit Canadian manufacturers, speaking in Quebec's native French about opportunities to expand their operations into New Hampshire.

The one-day trip to the Canadian province to address more than 100 manufacturers was sponsored by Public Service of New Hampshire. Participants planned to showcase Coos County as an area where companies can expand, place their products into the U.S. market and still be close to home.

Also taking part were New Hampshire economic development officials, community leaders and French-speaking business owners from Colebrook, Groveton and Berlin. The evening presentation, to be conducted in French, was one of a series made to Canadian manufacturers in recent years.

"It coincides very well with our efforts on travel and tourism," said George Bald, commissioner of the state Department of Resources and Economic Development. "People from Quebec are spending more time in our state. As we continue to improve relations, hopefully companies that are looking to expand will give the northern part of the state a first look."

Bald said some Canadian businesses have successfully expanded into New Hampshire in recent years, ranging from five employees to 200. Most are manufacturers, although there are some software-related and service companies.

Once a company expresses an interest, he said, it's "a long courtship" with much follow-up work, including setting up visits to the state.

"We try to highlight the fact that we work closely with our companies. It isn't a question that once they locate here that they lose contact," Bald said. "The fact that we don't have an income tax or a sales tax certainly is very interesting to them. And we also talk about the things we do to help New Hampshire companies, whether it's selling to the federal government or selling abroad."

Quebec is bordered on the south by Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. Canada is a top export destination for New England. Some of the leading exports to Canada from New England are aircraft engines and parts, electronic tubes and semi-conductors, computers and wood materials. Top imports from Canada to the region include aircraft, electronic generators and motors, petroleum and coal products and natural gas and electricity.

Recent developments illustrate another connection between New Hampshire and

Canada. National Grid sold its New Hampshire gas and electric distribution business to Ontario-based Algonquin Power and Utilities Corp. for $285 million.

Also under discussion is Northern Pass, a hydroelectric power project between Quebec and New Hampshire, although it has met with opposition from residents in the northern part of the state concerned about transmission lines and power towers.

In 2010, dignitaries from the United States and Canada gathered at the Hobo Railroad in Lincoln to dedicate a memorial garden to rail workers from both countries who served together in the armed forces and merchant marines.

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