

Luxembourg sells itself as Canada's European gateway

Crown prince, remarking on B.C.'s clean technology, says investments in his country will meet with success

BY BRIAN MORTON, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 12, 2012

Luxembourg may be a relatively insignificant trading partner with Canada, but the small country is selling itself as a potential entry point for B.C. companies to Europe.

"We want to promote Luxembourg and get B.C. companies to look to distribute their services through Luxembourg," said Loic Bertoli, the country's deputy director for foreign trade, who was in Vancouver Friday with a trade delegation attending workshops entitled Luxembourg For Business.

"The [proposed Europe-Canada] free trade agreement could ramp up investment between Canada and Luxembourg," he added, particularly in the fields of clean technology and ecommerce.

According to Canadian government statistics, Canada and the tiny country of half a million people squeezed between Belgium, France and Germany conducted approximately \$150 million in two-way trade in 2010.

However, total investment in Canada from Luxembourg, a major international banking centre, reached \$11.4 billion in 2010. Canada's total investment in Luxembourg increased to \$7.3 billion in 2010.

According to a release, Luxembourg is an ideal gateway to the European market and its 500 million consumers, is politically and socially stable, and has a skilled and multilingual workforce, state-of-the-art infrastructures and excellent connectivity to markets, a business-friendly legal and regulatory framework and a rewarding tax environment.

Luxembourg's Crown Prince Guillaume noted Friday that both B.C. and Vancouver are moving ahead in the field of clean technology and that investments in Luxembourg "will be crowned with success." Michael Ferguson, president and CEO of Vancouver based Ayogo Games Inc, which designs mobile and social games to help people manage chronic diseases, said Luxembourg looks like an ideal location for establishing their European office, which he plans to do in 2013.

"Europe is an important potential market for us," said Ferguson, who was at Friday's conference. "[Luxembourg] looks very promising. It has excellent infrastructure, a physical proximity to markets we're interested in, and the tax regime looks favourable."

Friday's session also involved the signing of a multimillion-dollar contract between Luxembourg's Epuramat and Albertabased waste water service provider Black Opal Energy Services Inc., which plans to expand operations into B.C. The deal involves a sales and distribution contract between the two companies, with Epuramat's containerized treatment plants being imported to Alberta for use in Black Opal's Canadian operations.

"This [deal] is potentially \$18 million over five years," said Black Opal president Russell Entwistle.

"There's a huge potential in attracting Canadian companies to Luxembourg as a gateway to Europe, especially in [the fields] of information communication technologies, health technologies and eco-technologies," said Bertoli.

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