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Canada missing the boat, says MP

By JOHN STEWART
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After touring some of Canada's trade commissions in Europe, Mississauga South MP Don Blenkarn says, "I think I've managed to demonstrate there are a whole lot of situations where we're not making the business we should have made."

Blenkarn visited Germany, Italy and Switzerland on a trip he was asked to make by Canada's new External Affairs Minister Joe Clark. On his return he submitted a report with a number of recommendations for change.

Blenkarn says he was accorded a very cordial welcome during his unofficial tour of inspection for the new Conservative government. "They were falling all over me," he said of Canadian trade and commerce officials.

The MP says he has some serious concerns about whom Canada has employed in its foreign service. He was shocked that the "nice young man" in charge of Canada's consulate in Milan, Italy, can't speak Italian. "He's trying furiously to learn Italian but why would we ever post him there in the first place?" asks Blenkarn. In the Lombardi Valley where much of Italy's business community is located most of the population speaks only Italian.



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During the recent federal election campaign, Blenkarn complained that on a trip to Egypt last year he had discovered that the Canadian consul there couldn't speak the local language either.

In a multilingual country such as ours there should be no difficulty finding personnel who can speak the language of the country where they are posted, claims the MP.

Many of the Canadian companies getting help in foreign lands are large corporations which really "don't need a trade and commerce department," suggests the MP. Clark is considering Blenkarn's report.