

# City hosts chambers of commerce network

**WORLD TRADE |** China now a 'central part of doing business'

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VANCOUVER SUN

Small and medium-size enterprises in China are now the biggest users of chambers of commerce services around the world as Chinese corporations seek international recognition and contacts.

Georges Fischer, chairman of the World Chambers Network Consortium in Paris, said a new global network based in Vancouver was established because of demand for better communications between businesses around

the world, especially in the Pacific Rim.

"China has become a very central part of doing business. Most of the people who are involved with the chambers want information about how to do business in China," Fischer said.

"At the same time, the number of companies in China wanting information about doing business with the rest of the world is growing faster than any other requests."

Fischer said while most of the major urban centres in China are well-known, many smaller regions like Xiamen are eager to develop their business interests.

In Shanghai alone, there are two million members in the local chamber of commerce.

On Monday, Fischer and representatives from other chambers of commerce around the world gath-

ered in Vancouver to launch a new business research centre based at Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre.

The business leaders also unveiled a new online gateway for businesses developed by Vancouver software company Storm Computer Services where the 25 million business members can exchange information, find venture partners, obtain market research and seek investors.

The gateway is used as a clearing house for bureaucratic red tape such as origins of products and to provide confirmation of a local company's standing in the community.

Milton Wong, chairman of HSBC Asset Management Ltd, and chancellor at Simon Fraser University, said businesses need to find ways to conduct international

trade effortlessly.

"Thirty years ago, when you were doing exporting or importing you needed 27 documents, from manifests to transportation documents to letters of credit," Wong said, who added that business affairs have become even more complicated today.

"Small and medium-size businesses cannot handle all this paperwork. It's too expensive for them, too slow."

Wong said the gateway has made it easier for small and medium-sized businesses to conduct international transactions.

"Big businesses have their own systems. This is to help small businesses come together and have a common platform and make themselves accessible to the world through the Web," Wong said Monday.



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**Georges Fischer of the World Chambers Network (left) and Milton Wong of SFU at the Vancouver Art Gallery.**