

## **Fair Trade concept catching on in Canada**

Fair Trade products grew by leaps and bounds in the Canadian marketplace in 2006, evidenced by an “impressive” 57 per cent increase in sales, says Reykia Fick with TransFair Canada.

A group advocating on behalf of Fair Trade producers, TransFair Canada has developed a kit to help Canadian towns and cities who want to follow the lead of Wolfville, N.S.

Located about 100 km from Halifax, Wolfville is the first and only town in Canada to boast a Fair Trade Town designation. The town achieved Fair Trade status in April 2007 and has a population of about 3,800. The designation essentially means the town supports Fair Trade products and is committed to sustainable consumption.

Fair Trade is a partnership that ensures producers and workers are paid a fair wage for their product and are treated with respect. Fair Trade premiums help fund health care, education, child care, pensions and increased wages in developing parts of the world.

Fick, who is in charge of communications and outreach for TransFair Canada, says the Fair Trade market is smaller in Canada than it is in the United Kingdom, where the Fair Trade Town movement began. But Canada’s market is growing rapidly.

A 1999 campaign to make the U.K. town of Garstang the first Fair Trade Town on Earth, was met with considerable support from residents and businesses alike. Since then, the idea has exploded across the U.K. where the 200th Fair Trade Town designation was celebrated in 2006.

“There’s a lot of interest and it’s starting to move more and more into the mainstream where the typical person has heard of Fair Trade,” Fick says, adding

there has been a lot of interest from the media and from different towns, individuals and grassroots groups.

“There has been a lot of interest around Wolfville and the campaign,” Fick says. “The fact that within this short period of time, so many towns are expressing an interest in working to become Fair Trade towns just demonstrates the huge amount of interest in Canada.”

For activists looking to drum up Fair Trade interest in their towns, Fick says the kit TransFair Canada developed in the summer of 2006 to help the cause requires a major commitment, more so in larger centres. The kit is loosely based on the U.K. model.

“In some ways, it’s easier to do in a small town because it is a lot of work,” Fick says. “(But) in the U.K., in some of the bigger cities, they have been able to achieve Fair Trade town status.”

For example, Edinburgh, 2001, (2001 population: 448,624) has achieved Fair Trade status. In London, they’re working borough by borough in order to become a Fair Trade city.

“We certainly want different communities of all levels to think about Fair Trade and the goals that are associated with the campaign.”

For more information or to access the kit, visit [www.transfair.ca](http://www.transfair.ca).