

Business urged to export, seek federal contracts

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Executives of Robert Bosch Corp. looked at 100 sites for its new high tech campus.

The German-based firm said "Yes" to Farmington Hills because of low interest, tax-free financing and other incentives worked out by the city, state and Detroit Edison Co.

So Bosch was the ideal spot for Gov. James Blanchard to announce his latest steps to stimulate business activity in Michigan and improve its business image.

"They're here, and hopefully they'll do well. We're going to make sure they do," said Blanchard, welcoming the firm which produces auto parts rang-

ing from small electric motors to fuel injection systems.

"This is happening around the state. Michigan is on the move."

AT A NEWS conference attended by representatives of several businesses the state has helped, Blanchard last week announced three more parts of his 20-point economic revitalization program.

Through the restructured Department of Commerce, the state will try to:

- Increase Michigan exports through a new Office of International Development.
- Help state businesses gain more federal contracts.
- Renew its commitment to pro-

moting Michigan as a good place to do business.

In expanding its business retention effort, the Commerce Department also has started a program to assist women in business.

And it has specialists to work with special sectors of business like automotive, food processing and forestry.

The governor outlined his economic revitalization plan in an address to the Michigan Legislature Oct. 4. He previously announced that a Commerce Department ombudsman will help businesses cut through regulatory red tape, new rules for franchising and simplified requirements for stock sales.

BLANCHARD stressed his determination to "forge a strong, new alliance between government, business, labor and education."

"For the first time in Michigan, major sectors are working together," explained Commerce Director Ralph Gerson, a former Washington, D.C. resident whom Blanchard brought home to Michigan to revamp the department.

"The confrontation mode has gone the way, hopefully, of the Model T. There is a new mode."

Gerson said incorporations are up 10 percent in the state. He added that "a rigorous set of conditions make it much more difficult for business today."

"If they falter, so does Michigan."

BLANCHARD announced new promotional materials for the "Say Yes to Michigan" campaign, which is in its third year. The governor said the campaign helped generate \$10 billion in tourism.

A new product promotion campaign makes "Yes Michigan" stickers available to state manufacturers who want to identify homegrown products for consumers.

"A psychological turnout for the state is crucial," said first lady Paula Blanchard, who is volunteering her time to the product promotion campaign.

"Michigan is the home of products, products, products."

Along with helping "take the mystery out of exporting" for Michigan businesses, the state will also work through its Washington office to bring in more federal contracts.

Gerson said the U.S. spends \$94 bil-



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lion yearly on procurement. And Michigan — which was the second largest defense contractor during World War II — has the capacity to "do it again."

"We intend to market Michigan as it has never been marketed before,"

stressed Gerson, adding that the Water Wonderland is "not just a beautiful state with a great shoreline."

"It's a state with all the economic assets and a tremendous future ahead of us."

State invests in 3 area growth firms

Three area firms are among 13 in Michigan which have received venture capital from state pension funds, according to state Treasurer Robert Bowman.

The state plunked \$23 million into high technology, rapid growth firms, Bowman said, adding:

"These investments not only produce a very high return on our capital, but also assist in retaining jobs and create a more diversified business climate in Michigan."

THE FIRMS, their products and the state investments are:

• Photon Sources, Livonia, laser welders — \$3.3 million in January 1983. This was the second largest of the 13 investments.

• Percepton, Farmington Hills, machine vision systems — \$2 million in December of 1982 and \$1 million in October 1983. Gov. James J. Blanchard used a dedication ceremony at Percepton last week to announce plans to reduce state red tape for business. Bowman said that at Percepton "we ex-

pect to earn five times our initial investment in under five years."

• Lexitel Corp., Birmingham, telecommunications, \$2 million in July.

OTHER FIRMS in which the state invested are:

Printer Inc., Benton Harbor; Neogen Corp., East Lansing; Synthetic Vision Systems, Condit Computer Corp. and Irwin Magnetics, all of Ann Arbor; Meridian Instruments, SMC Technology Corp., Quantum Composites, Midland; and Frab Robotics, Kalamazoo.

One chunk of money went to Michigan Investment Fund of Midland, which invested in three computer firms.

State law (PA 55) allows the Michigan Retirement Systems pension fund to invest up to 5 percent of its assets in venture capital financings for Michigan-based companies.

Two of the 13 investments were made by the administration of Gov. William G. Milliken but had not been announced by the governor's office.

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