UK, CANADA GOOD PLACES FOR NEW BUSINESS

With some of the highest salaries in the world available in the US, the UK and Canada are emerging as attractive places to do business. These are the findings of a comparative analysis completed by KPMG and presented in Houston at an event hosted by the British Consulate-General and the Canadian Consulate-General. The study evaluated a number of countries for business appeal, concluding that the best opportunities for businesses are Canada and the UK.

The analysis took into account business costs for labor, facilities, depreciation, financing/interest, transportation, utilities, non-income based tax, and income tax. These data were compared for Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US. Results varied for different business segments, with the US ranking strongest as a nation with businesses that fall into the category of low technology. For high-end technologies, the country of choice was Canada, which shows a cost advantage of 30.6% over the US for businesses heavily involved in R&D.

For the sake of more immediate comparison, assessments were made among cities worldwide. The data indicate that Houston is quite competitive in the high-tech fields, despite the fact that the US on the whole ranks much lower over all, said **Glenn Mair, Director of MMK Consulting**, the company that prepared the report. The US ranked sixth out of the nine countries evaluated. The strength of the US dollar attributed to the country's low ranking.

If the dollar continues gaining strength, "companies will say, 'yes, there's talent there, but we can't afford it,'" Mair said. At the same time, Mair noted, European countries have focused on decreasing the costs of telecom and utilities. "It's not just an exchange rate issue facing the US … it's also Europe reigning in its costs." British Consul-General Iain Murray said the UK is working to maintain its advantage. "The British government is very aware of the need to maintain a business-friendly environment," he said.