

CANADIAN BUSINESS AGENDA



February 2007

A monthly update from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce on policy issues affecting Canada's business sector

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has been Canada's *Voice of Business*[™] since 1925. Through our network of local chambers of commerce and boards of trade, at least one in every federal riding, we represent over 170,000 businesses. The *Canadian Business Agenda* is designed to keep you informed of business issues on a monthly basis. Please contact us on any issue in this newsletter that is of interest to you or your constituents.

Crucial time for Bill C-257

This week is a critical time for ***Bill C-257 An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers)***. It is the Canadian Chamber's opinion that any changes to the *Canada Labour Code*, especially an amendment that alters the relationship between employers and employees, deserves extensive study in order to fully understand the impacts on Canadian society and the economy. As stated in section 2.4 of ***Bill C-257***, the bill would prevent uninterrupted provision of services that affect seniors, families, small business and the Canadian economy – services such as 911; health and emergency services; transportation services (air, rail, marine and road) and news and weather warnings in the event of a storm or tragedy. After much work by various groups to have more extensive hearings on the bill, the Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee has completed hearing from external witnesses. Many of the witnesses who have appeared recently have not supported the bill and have provided detailed submissions to reinforce their message that this bill is bad public policy. The Canadian Chamber strongly urges all MPs to help defeat ***Bill C-257***.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates addresses Canadian Chamber Event

On February 20th, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates was in

Ottawa to address a Canadian Chamber of Commerce luncheon that attracted over 500 people. Microsoft Corporation is a worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential. Gates' address at the Canadian Chamber event covered topics such as economic prosperity and the use of information and communications technology and the importance of a skilled workforce.

Canada-India Business Forum

On February 5th, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Toronto Board of Trade, the Canada-India Business Council and the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce for a India Business Forum. The meeting focused on Canada-India economic relations and ways in which to enhance our growing, but still relatively small, bilateral relationship. Speakers from various businesses, the Asia Pacific Foundation, Export Development Canada and Ontario Minister of Economic Development and Trade Sandra Pupatello, each offered their perspective on the topic. Copies of the presentations at the forum will be posted on the Canadian Chamber Web site, www.chamber.ca. Also available on our Web site is the background discussion paper prepared for the forum. The Canadian Chamber is preparing a major policy paper on India which will be released later this spring.

Counterfeiting and Piracy – action required

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is very concerned about weak intellectual property protection and enforcement in Canada. The explosive growth of intellectual property crime has been illustrated very clearly by various studies and information from a variety of important sources as well as the media. While counterfeiting used to consist only of knock-off t-shirts and other novelty items, the high profitability and low

risk involved has allowed criminals, including organized crime rings, to become very active, pirating everything from pharmaceutical products, brake pads, electrical products, software, movies, food, wine, personal care products, automobile parts and luxury goods. Pressure on the Canadian government is steadily beginning to mount from Canadian and international agencies and business associations urging Canada to begin to act on this problem. Law enforcement agencies and prosecutors need better laws providing a greater ability to combat product counterfeiting and piracy. Legislative changes are required to adequately address this problem, most likely through the implementation of an omnibus bill. Effective changes to Canadian legislation will bring Canada in line with its international trading partners. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce will continue to press the government to act.

Privacy Legislation Update

The *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) is currently undergoing a five-year mandatory review of the legislation by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. PIPEDA applies to all organizations engaged in commercial activities unless the federal government exempts an organization or activity in a province that has substantially similar legislation to the act. British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec are the only provinces with laws recognized as substantially similar to PIPEDA. The Canadian Chamber appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on February 1st to convey member views with regard to PIPEDA. The general theme of the presentation was that the legislation as it is currently constituted is working for our members and it is too soon to make any substantive changes to the act. The Canadian Chamber noted that mandatory notification of a privacy breach was not required at this time, as companies follow proper procedures now if there is a breach. The Canadian Chamber is also in the process of working with other business organizations and the Privacy Commissioner's Office on privacy breach notification guidelines that an organization could quickly implement if there is a breach to properly handle the situation. In addition, the Canadian Chamber will be making it easier for members to access information regarding privacy issues by updating our Web site and using other communications methods to make necessary information more accessible.

Industry Committee Releases Report on Manufacturing Sector

On February 6th, the House of Commons Industry Committee released its final report on the Canadian manufacturing sector entitled *Manufacturing: Moving Forward – Rising to the Challenge*. The committee began its hearings on this issue in May 2006 and the Canadian Chamber appeared before the Committee in June 2006. This report calls on the government to implement 22 recommendations in the areas of taxation, energy, labour, trade, intellectual property rights protection, infrastructure, regulatory, and research, development and commercialization that would assist the manufacturing sector. The Canadian Chamber encourages the government to begin implementation of the report.

Letter Regarding Investment Issues Sent to Minister Bernier

On February 12th, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to Industry Minister Bernier concerning investment protectionism and some of the negative signals that Canada is giving in regard to our openness to foreign investment. Citing the government of Canada's analysis of foreign investment's value to the Canadian economy, as discussed in *Advantage Canada*, and an International Chamber of Commerce policy statement, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce advocated that Canada not resort to investment protectionism. The letter also encouraged the swift ratification by the government of Canada of the International Convention for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Although Canada was one of the founding nations that participated in negotiating the original ICSID Convention, Canada only signed on to the Convention in December 2006, becoming the 144th country to do so.

Dates to Watch

March 19th – the Canadian Chamber will provide a response to the federal budget.

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