

CANADIAN BUSINESS AGENDA



March - April 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.

Counterfeiting and Piracy – Action Required by Parliamentarians

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is very concerned about weak intellectual property protection and enforcement in Canada. We have been working with a coalition of business groups, including the Canadian Anti-Counterfeiting Network (CACN), the Canadian Recording Industry Association and the Retail Council of Canada on this problem and to spur needed federal action. The CACN will be releasing a comprehensive report entitled “*A Road Map for Change*” on the extent of the problem of counterfeiting in Canada very shortly. The House Public Safety and National Security Committee held hearings on counterfeiting on March 27 & 29, with the Canadian Chamber appearing at that time. A report on counterfeiting will be prepared by the Public Safety Committee in the near future. The Industry Committee is also planning to study this issue April 25, 30 & May 7.

While counterfeiting used to consist of such things as 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 will continue to press the government to act. We encourage all Members of Parliament to assist in educating their constituents on the seriousness of this problem by including information on this topic in MP publications.

Chamber Responds to Federal Budget

The recent federal budget unveiled some fiscal measures that will enhance Canada's productivity and provide a welcome boost to our competitiveness, particularly in the areas of the income tax burden on low-income Canadians and improvements in the capital cost allowance structure for the manufacturing sector, as well as investments in post-secondary education and infrastructure.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce expressed concern over the fact that the government did not deliver on its ‘*Advantage Canada*’ commitment as it failed to hold the line on program spending, and in making a more meaningful reduction in the personal tax burden of Canadians thus missing the opportunity to return more of their hard-earned dollars to Canadians.

The Canadian Chamber also noted that the government must maintain its focus on tackling Canada's lagging productivity, to ensure long term economic growth and global competitiveness and a high standard of living and quality of life for all Canadians.

Chamber Declares Victory on Bill C-257

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade, corporate members and associations took part in a months-long campaign to defeat *Bill C-257*, (replacement workers bill) which business saw as a threat to the economy should a strike take hold in one of the federally-legislated industries affected by this bill.

It is business' opinion that any change 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.

The Canadian Chamber thanks Parliamentarians for their support.

Government's Proposal for the Replacement of CAIS Reflects Canadian Chamber's Recommendations

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has been following the issue of *Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization* (CAIS) reform and, in 2006, over 200 of our local chambers from coast to coast to coast unanimously passed a policy resolution at our Annual general meeting providing the federal government with a number of recommendations on how to improve the CAIS program, a program for farmers that integrates income stabilization and disaster protection and is delivered by the federal and provincial governments (depending on jurisdiction). Recently, the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, announced the government's proposal for the replacement of the CAIS program. Principally, these proposals consist of: contributory-style savings accounts; an agreement in principle on a new disaster relief framework; an expansion of production insurance to cover more commodities; and an improved margin-based program. In addition, Budget 2007 announced \$1 billion allotted to kick-starting these savings accounts and to help producers deal with rising production costs.

All of these proposals were mirrored in the Chamber's 2006 policy resolution on this issue so the Canadian Chamber of Commerce applauds the federal government for listening to Canadian businesses and providing a sensible proposal to replace the CAIS program.

Chamber Supports Marketing Choice for Barley Farmers

A recent letter to Agriculture Minister Strahl congratulated the federal government for allowing western Canadian barley producers to clearly and decisively express their desire for marketing choice in the sale of their product.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has long called for the reform of the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly marketing powers for western Canadian wheat and barley. The results of the recent plebiscite indicate that a substantial majority, 62% of the nearly 30,000 barley producers that cast a vote in the plebiscite, share this view.

With western Canadian barley producers confirming their wish to have marketing choice, the Chamber looks forward to seeing the amendments to the *Canadian Wheat Board Act*

regulations that will allow the government to deliver on its promise to western Canadian barley farmers to reform the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly over the marketing of western Canadian barley.

The Canadian Chamber notes that the end of the CWB's monopoly over the marketing of barley is not the final reform to the Canadian Wheat Board that the federal government had promised. We fully support the government's efforts to introduce marketing choice for western Canadian wheat as well and will continue to work with the government to bring this reform into effect.

Canadian Chamber Welcomes Government's Move to Ratify the ICSID Convention

On March 30, legislation was introduced in the House to implement the *Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes Between States and Nationals of Other States* (ICSID Convention). A Canadian Chamber policy resolution passed unanimously by local chambers from coast to coast to coast called for such action. Already, 143 other countries have ratified the ICSID Convention.

Implementation of the ICSID Convention by Canada will afford Canadian businesses investing abroad the same level of protection as our competitors. In addition, ratification of ICSID will help make Canada an investment destination of choice for foreign investors. The Canadian Chamber encourages all parliamentarians to work together to implement the ICSID Convention as soon as possible and thus bring real benefits to all Canadians.

Canadian Chamber Supports Move to Implement Corruption Convention

March 22, Bill C-48, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code in Order to Implement the United Nations Convention Against Corruption*, was introduced in the House at its first reading. This act makes a number of amendments to existing Canadian laws on corruption and related offences in order to implement the *United Nations Convention Against Corruption* (UNCAC). Canada is a signatory to the UNCAC, but has not ratified this treaty. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce fully supports the move to implement this important treaty and calls upon the government to ratify the UNCAC as soon as possible.

***For more information on the
Canadian Chamber of Commerce & our policy initiatives,
consult our Web site at www.chamber.ca
or contact Chris Gray, cgray@chamber.ca,
(613) 238-4000, x251***



THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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