

January 23, 2009

Hon. Chuck Strahl, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and
Federal interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

Dear Minister:

In October, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce concluded its 79th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Quebec City. One of the highlights of Chamber's AGM is the Policy Session. It is during the Policy Session that resolutions submitted by local chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across the country are debated and voted on by accredited delegates. Once approved, these resolutions become the policy position of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for three years. This year our delegates issued a clear and decisive national policy mandate that we intend to pursue vigorously with the federal government over the coming months.

Our renewed national policy mandate includes a number of issues that fall within your portfolio.

Achieving Certainty for Business: The challenge for federal, provincial and territorial governments is to create an environment which allows businesses to operate successfully, competitively and with some certainty while the resolution of Aboriginal rights and title issues is underway. The solution is to institute an effective consultations process. The Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government provide adequate funding and support to implement its *Interim Guidelines for Federal Officials to Fulfill the Legal Duty to Consult* for matters within its jurisdiction in order to make the consultation process efficient for the business community.

Aboriginal Treaty Negotiations – Fisheries Component: Virtually all treaty negotiations include provisions for fisheries. While the commercial fishing sector understands and accepts that there will be increased access to fisheries by Aboriginal groups, the challenge is to move forward in an equitable way, assuring a level playing field so that no one group of commercial participants has a competitive advantage over another.

The Canadian Chamber calls upon the federal government work with the provinces and territories to implement the several of the recommendations from the Pearce/McRae Joint Task Group Report; to formally declare it will fairly compensate

established harvesters for the transfer of allocation to Aboriginal groups; and immediately create an independent Crown Agency with a significant base capital fund to acquire licenses in various fisheries for present agreement in principle (AIP) arrangements or for interim agreements to provide economic benefits to Aboriginal groups until comprehensive agreements are complete.

Aboriginal Labour Force Strategy -Tapping into an Underutilized Pool Of

Labour Supply: The Canadian Chamber of Commerce calls upon the federal government to work with provincial and territorial governments, as well as with the Aboriginal and broader business communities, to ensure holistic and integrated assessment, support, treatment, training and employment referral services are provided to businesses of all sizes; improve the collection and monitoring of Aboriginal employment outcomes by expanding the *Aboriginal Labour Force Survey* to all provinces, territories and on-reserve communities; and ensure that any new programs and funding be provided only where there is a demonstrated demand and partnership with employers and/or businesses.

Illegal Cigarette Trade in Canada: The trade in illegal cigarettes in Canada is booming, resulting in losses for the Canadian economy, not only for retailers, but also because unpaid taxes on the sale of illegal tobacco diminishes federal and provincial government revenues and is estimated at upwards of \$2 billion in 2006. Given the substantial increase in this criminal activity and the involvement of organized crime, the Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government implement adequate enforcement measures and collaborate with the provinces to ensure compliance with legislation. In addition, the federal government should establish a closer link with the Aboriginal communities in border areas to work together in halting this illegal and dangerous activity.

The full text of these resolutions is attached and we would be pleased to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perrin Beatty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Perrin Beatty
President and CEO

cc: John Duncan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development
Michael Wernick, Deputy Minister, Indian and Northern Affairs

Attachments