

NEWS RELEASE

Canada's Chambers call on feds for airport cost relief, more liberalized air access, review of TFW program, solutions to Port labour problems

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charlottetown, September 29, 2014 – Business leaders from across Canada are calling on Ottawa to address major national and B.C. business issues.

At the Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM in Charlottetown, which wraps up today, Chamber delegates from across Canada backed made-in-B.C. policies calling for:

- federal airport cost relief to allow airports such as YVR to compete with cross-border competition;
- a federal re-commitment to marketing Canada as a tourism destination, including improvements to the visa system and more liberalized air agreements;
- long-term solutions to trucking labour unrest at Port Metro Vancouver terminals, which continues to threaten B.C.'s economy; and
- a review of changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program, which impact both the low-wage hospitality sector in resort destinations such as Whistler, as well as high-wage industries such as LNG.

“Chambers across Canada have stood together to call for a competitive air industry, a national commitment to tourism, a review of TFW program changes, and long-term port labour fixes,” said John Winter, president and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce.

Winter noted that these policies, all penned in B.C., are of major significance on the West Coast.

“Whether its dollars flowing to Bellingham and Seattle airports rather than YVR, Whistler struggling to fill staffing gaps, or port labour problems rippling through the Lower Mainland economy, these problems are hitting B.C. hard,” Winter said. “That’s why our province has led the call for fixes.”

Winter noted that airports and tourism have been a significant focus at this year’s Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM, the largest business-policy conference in the country.

“As Canadians, we’ve seen our ranking as a tourism destination fall catastrophically in recent years due our failure to slash costs and travel barriers that are discouraging tourists,” Winter said. “Chambers are calling on Ottawa to get serious about tourism and reverse this trend.”

Chambers have voted in favour of two made-in-B.C. policies that tackle tourism industry challenges by proposing:

- relief from the federal fees that airports are charged, and which get passed on to airlines and thus to customers (See the draft policy, *Reduce Costs to Improve Canadian Aviation Competitiveness*, [here](#). Please note that edits may have been made on the resolution floor).; and
- renewed focus on the tourism sector, including more funding for the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), improving cumbersome visa processes and pursuing mutually beneficial liberalized air agreements; and moving the CTC to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to better realize tourism as an export commodity (See the draft policy, *Increasing Canada’s Competitiveness through Marketing as an International Destination*, [here](#). Please note that edits may have been made on the resolution floor).

Another made-in-B.C. policy, also voted in at the Canadian Chamber AGM, calls for a review of the federal overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker program.

“I can’t emphasize enough how damaging these program changes have been to employers in B.C. and across Canada,” Winter said. “In B.C., resort communities such as Whistler are now fighting tooth and nail to fill hospitality jobs that Canadians simply don’t want. At the same time, high-wage industries such as film and LNG are also grappling with the unintended consequences of this shift. This is a top-tier problem for B.C. business.”

See the draft policy, *Addressing the Temporary Foreign Worker Program*, [here](#). Please note that edits may have been made on the resolution floor.

Canada’s Chambers voted in a policy, again out of B.C., calling for long-term fixes to trucking labour unrest involving the terminals at Port Metro Vancouver, Canada’s largest port.

“The recent trucking labour dispute may have dropped out of headlines, but trucking labour risk is still simmering below the surface – and Canada’s international shipping clients know it,” Winter said. “The port is a huge economic driver for B.C. and the country, but if we don’t want to lose cargo and jobs to rival ports, we need a long-term plan to tackle labour reliability.”

See the draft policy, *Trucking Disruption of Terminal Operations at Port Metro Vancouver*, [here](#). Please note that edits may have been made on the resolution floor.

Attending this year's Canadian Chamber AGM in Charlottetown were representatives from the following B.C. chambers/boards of trade:

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce,
Fort Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce,
Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce,
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce,
Houston and District Chamber of Commerce,
Kamloops Chamber of Commerce,
Kelowna Chamber of Commerce,
North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce,
Parksville Chamber of Commerce,
Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce,
Prince George Chamber of Commerce,
Richmond Chamber of Commerce,
Vancouver Board of Trade, and
Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce.

The BC Chamber is the largest and most broadly-based business organization in the province. Representing more than 125 Chambers of Commerce and 36,000 businesses of every size, sector and region of the province, the BC Chamber of Commerce is "The Voice of Business in BC."

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