

NEWS RELEASE

B.C.'s Chambers to urge international trade agreements, air competitiveness at Canadian Chamber AGM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regina, September 15, 2016 – B.C.'s Chambers of Commerce will call for new international trade agreements and improved air competitiveness at this weekend's Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM in Regina (September 17-19).

“Right now, businesses in B.C. risk being sidelined from international opportunities,” said Val Litwin, president and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce. “We need to ramp up B.C.'s access to key economies to help our businesses break into global markets.”

B.C.'s Chambers are calling for:

- The federal government to support the Canadian forest industry by renewing an agreement with the United States, which imports \$20 billion of Canada's \$31 billion industry, and defend Canada's rights to free trade of softwood lumber – a policy initiative led by the BC Chamber;
- The finalization and ratification of a free trade agreement with India, one of the world's fastest growing economies - a policy initiative being led by the Surrey Board of Trade; and
- A more competitive air policy that improves air access and allows the free movement of labour and goods - a policy initiative led by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and Richmond Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber of Commerce, Prince George Chamber of Commerce and Whistler Chamber of Commerce.

“The high cost of travel and the lack of airline competition is stunting Canada's ability to attract not only tourists, but also international companies wanting to do business within our borders,” said Litwin. “This, coupled with the need for action on renewing a trade agreement involving one of B.C.'s largest resource industries, is hampering our success in the global arena – we need to fix that.”

Additionally, B.C.'s Chambers will also be calling for:

- An affordable pension environment for all stakeholders that enables employees to increase contributions without requiring employers to contribute additional funds;

- A return to demand-driven immigration to ensure that businesses aren't struggling to meet their skilled labour needs – a policy initiative led by the Victoria Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber;
- Increased government support for responsible resource development in Canada – a policy initiative led by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber; and
- Improved access to the Canada Job Grant for small- and medium-sized businesses that currently struggle to access funds due to red-tape – a policy initiative led by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber.

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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