
NEWS RELEASE

BC Chamber to urge airport cost relief, open skies, review of TFW program, solutions to Port labour problems at national Chamber AGM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver, September 24, 2014 – At this weekend’s Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM in Charlottetown (September 27-29), the BC Chamber of Commerce will be 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 open skies;
- long-term solutions to trucking labour unrest at Port Metro Vancouver terminals, which continues to threaten B.C.’s economy;
- a review of changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which impact both the low-wage hospitality sector in resort destinations such as Whistler, as well as high-wage industries such as LNG; and
- in the wake of the William Decision, more clarity on the extent to which business must consult with First Nations, in order to give investors a better picture of B.C. as an investment jurisdiction.

“B.C. has a major stake in these national issues,” said John Winter, president and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce. “Whether it’s 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 and we’re looking for fixes.”

Winter noted that the aviation and tourism industries are a big focus this year.

“If you live in B.C., you can’t miss our province’s immense tourist appeal. On top of that, we’re the Pacific gateway to all of Canada, which is truly a world-class travel destination,” he said. “Yet 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 two made-in-B.C. policies tackle those challenges by proposing:

- relief from the federal fees that airports charged, and which get passed on to airlines and thus to customers (See the policy, *Reduce Costs to Improve Canadian Aviation Competitiveness*, [here](#)); and

- renewed focus on the tourism sector, including more funding for the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), improving cumbersome visa processes and pursuing open skies; and moving the CTC to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to better realize tourism as an export commodity (See the policy, *Increasing Canada's Competitiveness through Marketing as an International Destination*, [here](#)).

Another made-in-B.C. policy 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 B.C. employers,” Winter said. “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 policy, *Addressing the Temporary Foreign Worker Program*, [here](#).

Winter also highlighted a policy calling for long-term fixes to trucking labour unrest at Port Metro Vancouver terminals.

“The recent trucking labour dispute may have dropped out of headlines, but trucking labour risk is still simmering below the surface – and our international shipping clients know it,” Winter said. “The port is a huge economic driver for B.C., 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 policy, *Trucking Disruption of Terminal Operations at Port Metro Vancouver*, [here](#).

Another B.C.-made policy calls for certainty around aboriginal title.

“The William Decision has further ramped up the uncertainty that exists around the role First Nations play in getting projects approved,” Winter said. “With investment hanging in the balance, it's imperative that government heed the courts and step up to create much-needed certainty around the consultation process.”

See the policy, *Aboriginal Issues: Achieving Greater Certainty*, [here](#).

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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