

Attention Business Editors

For Immediate Release

Business Groups to push for full workforce mobility between Canada and the U.S.

Toronto November 1, 2005.

A coalition of business organizations, with interests in the movement of manpower between Canada and the U.S., today announced support for a proposal from the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America that would provide for the greater freedom movement of citizens to live and work in the other country by 2010.

Stephen Cryne, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC), and a member of the coalition said today, "CERC is committed to vigorously pushing for change that will open our borders. At our recent conference in Niagara Falls, former Deputy Prime Minister John Manley, a co-chair of the Task Force, reinforced the need for business to become more involved in removing barriers to workforce mobility. Why are we able to move goods in a matter of hours easily between Canada and the U.S. but when it comes to the movement human capital, the delays are enormous and the regulations frustrating? Governments are not grasping the fact that with a global shortage of talent, the ability to rapidly deploy expertise between our two countries is our best defence in maintaining a prosperous North American community." The Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC), is Canada's only organization devoted to advancing the interests and issues for workforce mobility.

Other Coalition members include the American Chamber of Commerce in Canada (AmCham Canada) representing both U.S. and Canadian companies doing business across the border, and the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance (Can/Am BTA) representing some 60,000 members focused on the cross border facilitation.

Jim Phillips, President and CEO of Can/Am BTA, said, "as long as the required background and security checks are satisfied in both countries, this could be a successful endeavour." Phillips is proposing that a pilot program be designed that would allow an equal number of individuals to work in the other country by commuting, say, from Manitoba to North Dakota, and from Minneapolis to Manitoba, to fill needed jobs - especially where housing may be short and commuting from the other country would fulfill the need.

Neil Sinclair, founding President of AmCham Canada, supported the ideas advanced by CERC and Mr. Manley. Companies that are seeking a competitive advantage have serious challenges today in moving their employees for even a few days to a location just over the border. To be efficient in a North American context, they need to be able to draw from the best and widest talent pool available in Canada and the United States, without a huge degree of preplanning and even then surrounded by degrees of uncertainty. "Opening up the border to greater mobility advances the manpower opportunities in both countries," he said.

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