

CEC Bulletin

(January, 2008)

Canada – China Tripartite Seminar

December, 2007

Canada-China Cooperation Framework

The political relationship between Canada and China has evolved significantly in recent years. In November 2007, Canada had the privilege of welcoming a cabinet level Minister from the Chinese government. One significant development from this visit was the adoption of a *Cooperation Framework* between the two nations in the field of industrial relations and labour standards. The Agreement will be in force through to the end of 2009 and represents a strong signal from the Chinese government that it is committed to improving its labour relations infrastructure. A copy of the *Cooperation Framework* has been provided with this update.

This agreement establishes the foundation for an active dialogue and exchange of information between the two nations on the topics of industrial relations and labour standards. Of particular interest are approaches towards collective bargaining, dispute resolution and the enforcement of labour standards. This dialogue will be achieved through various initiatives, including study groups, joint workshops, and seminars.

Tripartite Seminar

The first tripartite seminar held under the new agreement took place in Beijing and Shanghai, China, during the week of December 4, 2007. Both nations were represented by senior government officials and a rich cross-section of influential leaders in the labour relations field. Members of the Canadian delegation included:

Scott Streiner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour Program, HRSDC;
Susanna Zagar, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Labour;
Barbara Byers, Executive Vice President, Canadian Labour Congress;
Steve Bedard, Chair, Canadian Employers Council; and
Charles Philippe Rochon and **Irene Zhou**, Labour Program, HRSDC

The Chinese delegation included:

The Vice Minister and senior officials of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MOLSS);
Representatives from the China Employer Council; and
The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

Topics Addressed

This tripartite seminar was focused on the topics of labour standards legislation and enforcement and the role of collective bargaining in the setting of terms and conditions of work related to hours of work and time off. The CEC was invited to attend the seminar by the HRSDC and was asked to deliver a presentation on the views of Canadian employers with respect to these topics. The CEC presentation was delivered by Steve Bedard, a copy of which has been included with this update.

During the week, the Canadian delegation was also provided with briefings by the Canadian embassy, the ILO office in Beijing, and the Canadian consulate in Shanghai. The delegation also met with representatives from the Shanghai Bureau of Labour and Social Security (the municipal equivalent of MOLSS). This included a visit to the Shanghai Electric facility located just outside of the city of Shanghai.

Moving Forward

Both delegations viewed the first tripartite seminar as a success not only with respect to the dialogue on employment standards and enforcement but, more importantly, in developing the relationships and norm of frank discussion for future seminars. The next exchange of information is expected to take place in Canada, during the spring of 2008. The anticipated topic for these meetings is the collective bargaining process.

The CEC will continue to keep you informed with respect to any further developments under this agreement. In support of that goal, a paper on the current developments in labour policy in China has been included with this update. The paper is co-authored by Anil Verma and Jing Wang from the University of Toronto and Stephen Frost from the City University of Hong Kong.

If you have any additional questions or would like more information on this topic, please contact Steve Bedard (steve.bedard@telus.com).