

# CEC Bulletin

(May, 2009)

## 5<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Americas

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, April 15-19, 2009

### Introduction

The 5th Summit of the Americas took place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago from April 15 to 19, 2009 under the theme, “Securing Our Citizen’s Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security, and Environmental Sustainability”. The 5th Summit brought together the Heads of State and Government of the 34 Member States of the Organization of American States (“OAS”) to discuss and take action on political, economic and social issues that are of common interest throughout the hemisphere.

The 5th Summit was the first to be hosted by a Caribbean nation; previous Summits were held in Miami, United States of America (1994), Santiago, Chile (1998), Quebec City, Canada (2001), and Mar del Plata, Argentina (2005). Because the 5th Summit took place against the backdrop of the current global economic crisis, discussions focused on the hemispheric economy and strategies for promoting economic recovery and growth.

### The Private Sector Forum, April 15-16, 2009

The 5th Summit commenced on April 15, 2009 with three parallel forums: the Private Sector Forum, the Civil Society Forum (including a Workers Forum), and the Youth Forum. Brian Burkett and John Craig represented the Canadian Employers Council (“CEC”) and CEATAL (the hemispheric organization representing employers) at the Private Sector Forum. Over the course of two days, the Private Sector Forum dealt with the following issues: Challenges and Opportunities Arising from the Global Economic Crisis; Public/Private Partnerships to Develop Human Capital; Corporate Social Responsibility; Investments in Oil, Gas and Alternative Energy; Major Infrastructure Projects; Investments in Information and Communication Technology; and Economic Stimulus Packages. Speakers included the Right Honourable Joe Clark, former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, and Hilda Solis, United States Secretary of Labor. One of the sponsors of the Private Sector Forum, the Royal Bank of Canada, hosted a special session on environmental sustainability with guest speaker David Bell, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies at York University.

### **Dialogue with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, April 17, 2009**

The key Summit event on April 17, 2009 was the “Dialogue with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs”. During this Dialogue, representatives of civil society, workers, the private sector, youth and indigenous peoples were invited to make presentations to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 34 participating nations (including the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs). Brian Burkett spoke at the Dialogue on behalf of the CEC and CEATAL. The presentation from the CEC and CEATAL emphasized seven key considerations that should guide the socio-economic policies of the nations of the hemisphere:

1. Enhancing open trade and resisting protectionism;
2. Increasing access to credit so that businesses can continue operations and expand;
3. Stimulating the private sector to drive economic recovery;
4. Stimulating demand by coordinating national stimulus efforts;
5. Ensuring the effective regulation of financial markets;
6. Protecting the most vulnerable in society; and
7. Ensuring that social progress is not undermined.

### **Meeting of the Heads of State and Government, April 17-19, 2009**

The formal meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the 34 participating nations commenced on the evening of April 17, 2009. United States President Barack Obama used the 5th Summit as an opportunity to address strained relations between the U.S. and Latin America. To this end, President Obama held a meeting with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, and called for a “new beginning” in relations between the United States and Cuba. Cuba was not permitted to attend the 5th Summit because it is not a democratic state; nevertheless, Cuba was a major topic of discussion throughout the 5th Summit.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper used the 5th Summit as an opportunity to call for expanded trade liberalization in the hemisphere. Prime Minister Harper also announced that Canada will contribute \$4 billion to the Inter-American Development Bank to assist in financing projects throughout the Americas, and announced the expansion of scholarship programs to bring students from the Caribbean and Latin America to Canadian universities and colleges.

The 5th Summit concluded on April 19, 2009 with the issuance of the “Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain”. The Declaration includes statements of commitment in respect of economic and social development, environmental sustainability, energy independence, and public security and crime. Paragraph 15 of the Declaration is notable because it references the International Labour Organization and the promotion of decent work, and refers hemispheric labour issues to the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (“IACML”).

**15. Reaffirming our commitment to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, we will continue to promote the creation of more opportunities for decent work in the formal sector. We will enforce our domestic labour laws to provide for acceptable conditions of work and safe and healthy workplaces, free from violence, harassment and discrimination. We will promote continuous training programmes in collaboration with workers' representatives and the private sector as appropriate, with the goal of generating the necessary technical skills to enable workers to respond to the demands of the labour market. We therefore call upon the Ministers of Labour, within the context of the OAS Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML), in collaboration with their workers' and employers' consultative bodies and with the support of the ILO, as appropriate, to endorse, at the 16th IACML to be held in 2009, a work programme that advances these objectives.**

The "Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain" can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.summit-americas.org>

If you have any questions about the 5th Summit, or would like to obtain a copy of any materials issued at the 5th Summit, please feel free to contact Brian Burkett ([bburkett@heenan.ca](mailto:bburkett@heenan.ca); 416-360-3529) or John Craig ([jcraig@heenan.ca](mailto:jcraig@heenan.ca); 416-360-3527).

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The Canadian Employers Council (CEC) prepares and distributes the CEC Bulletin for its members' individual use only. This message is composed in MS Outlook and contains hyperlinks that require an HTML-enabled email program. For inquiries or comments, please contact Normand Coté of Bank of Montreal, Chair of the CEC, at [normand.cote@bmo.com](mailto:normand.cote@bmo.com) or Brian Burkett of Heenan Blaikie, Counsel to the CEC, at [bburkett@heenan.ca](mailto:bburkett@heenan.ca).

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