

## **CEC Bulletin**

(October, 2004)

### **The Summit of the Americas and the IACML Process**

<b>Workshop on Supporting Economic Growth Through Effective Employment Services</b>
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The 13<sup>th</sup> Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (“IACML”), which took place in Salvador, Brazil in September 2003, established a Plan of Action to govern Pan-American labour integration within the Free Trade Area of the Americas (“FTAA”) process. Brazil is the chair of the 13<sup>th</sup> IACML.

The most recent event under the 13<sup>th</sup> IACML Plan of Action, a Workshop entitled “Supporting Economic Growth Through Effective Employment Services”, took place in Cancun, Mexico on September 29-30, 2004. In attendance were representatives of labour ministries and departments from countries across the Americas, along with delegates representing employer and labour groups. CEATAL, the organization representing employers of the Americas, sent two delegates to the Workshop, Alfredo Kupfer (from Mexico) and John Craig (from the Canadian Employers Council and Heenan Blaikie LLP).

There were several notable presentations at the Workshop. For example, Derwyn Sangster of the Canada Labour and Business Centre (“CLBC”), based in Ottawa, outlined the “Brazil/Canada Technology Transfer Project on Human Resource Development”, which is taking place in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The CLBC and the Sao Paulo Secretariat of Employment and Labour Relations have entered into an innovative partnership to develop systems for enhancing public employment services and professional education and training. The Project is focused on identifying local needs in Sao Paulo, and sharing Canadian expertise to address those needs. Discussions centred on whether the Project could be a model for further initiatives in the Americas.

Representatives of the United States Department of Labor, along with their counterparts in the English-speaking Caribbean, made a detailed presentation on a co-operative project to create an Internet-based job bank system and expand employment services in thirteen (13) Caribbean countries. The project, funded by the Department of Labor, could also serve as a model for future initiatives in the Americas.

CEATAL's presentation focused on several important themes: ensuring efficiency in the delivery of employment services; improving systems for gathering labour market information, so that services and strategies can be properly targeted; providing employment services to all employers, in particular small enterprises that may require the greatest assistance in fulfilling their needs; and encouraging tripartite dialogue, so that employers and their representatives are involved at all stages of the development of employment services and strategies.

Further events under the 13<sup>th</sup> IACML Plan of Action are expected to be scheduled shortly. These will include meetings of Working Group 1 (Social Dimensions of the Summit of the Americas Process) and Working Group 2 (Building Capacities of Labour Ministries) in the Spring of 2005. The 14<sup>th</sup> IACML will be launched in September 2005, with Mexico assuming the chair.

#### **Fourth Summit of the Americas to Focus on Hemispheric Labour and Employment Issues**

The Fourth Summit of the Americas will take place in November 2005 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Argentina, the chair of the Fourth Summit, has signalled its intention that hemispheric labour and employment issues should be the priority issue of the Fourth Summit. In fact, the theme of the Summit will be "Job Creation, Human Rights, and Democratic Development". In this context, it is expected that the work of the IACML will become crucial to the success of the Fourth Summit. CEATAL, and national employer organizations like the Canadian Employers Council, will likely be called upon to take an even more active role in future discussions and initiatives within the IACML and the Summit Process.

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