

# U.S. bargaining in good faith, trade minister says

**FORESTRY** | But Ottawa says it won't sign a deal unless provinces retain control over timber-pricing policies

BY PETER O'NEIL  
VANCOUVER SUN

OTTAWA — International Trade Minister David Emerson on Tuesday shrugged off a revelation that the U.S. government, as stated in a letter leaked to *The Vancouver Sun*, will use a tentative Canada-U.S. softwood lumber accord as a tool to fight alleged sub-

dization of the lumber industry by provincial governments.

Emerson said he doesn't see the letter as a sign of bad faith, adding that Ottawa won't strike a deal that erodes the sovereign right of governments to set their own lumber-pricing practices.

"I don't see it as bad faith at all. I think it's part of the ongoing winding road of negotiations," Emerson told reporters.

The letter to the powerful U.S. lumber lobby, called the Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports, says the U.S. views the accord's purpose to "mitigate to the greatest extent possible Canadian practices found by the Department of Commerce to constitute unfair trade practices."

"This will be a guiding consideration in the U.S. Government's monitoring and enforcement of the 2006 Softwood Lumber Agreement."

Critics of the framework agreement said the letter backs up their view that Canada, by signing the deal, is giving up its numerous legal victories before

North American Free Trade Agreement panels that have concluded that Canadian forest management practices don't harm the American industry.

Emerson said Tuesday his government won't sign a deal unless it "restrains" U.S. protectionists who have waged a legal war against the Canadian industry for decades, alleging that provincial lumber-pricing systems subsidize Canadian exporters.

"For Canada, it's critically important that we retain our sovereignty, and we have done so, in terms of forest-management and timber-pricing policies. So

I'm not concerned about that."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper was ridiculed in the House of Commons on Tuesday for failing to follow through on his declaration in April that the Tory government had finally resolved the lumber dispute.

"Our negotiators, ambassadorial personnel and others are hard at work finalizing the legal text of this agreement," Harper replied.

"What I do know is that this is a good deal for Canadians. That is why we want to get it done."

Sun Ottawa Bureau

## The Alberta disadvantage

Alberta is facing a labour shortage that is likely to get worse, the Conference Board of Canada warns. B.C. faces similar problems, but the numbers below indicate that the West Coast has a little further to go before reaching a crisis point, despite a labour force growth rate that was much slower than Alberta's in May.

	ALBERTA	B.C.
Labour force in May	1.9 million	2.3 million
Labour force change April to May	+1.6%	+0.3%
Employment rate in May	71.4%	62.6%
Unemployment rate in May	3.4%	4.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, May 2006

VANCOUVER SUN

# B.C. and Alberta compete for scarce labour

**EMPLOYMENT** | The present shortage is just 'the tip of the iceberg,' Conference Board of Canada warns

BY SCOTT SIMPSON  
VANCOUVER SUN

Fresh warnings about a dire shortage of workers in Alberta are drawing clucks of sympathy but no offers of help from a tight British Columbia job market that's facing its own challenges.

The Conference Board of Canada warned in a report released Tuesday that Alberta's present labour shortage is "just the tip of the iceberg" and that without aggressive measures to address the problem, the province's economic growth will suffer.

The board says that if current growth patterns persist, the nation's leading oil-producing province could be short 332,000 workers by 2025.

"If faster growth in labour productivity does not make up for the shortage in workers, the province will be unable to achieve its economic growth potential," said board vice-president and chief economist Glen Hodgson in a news release.

The board recommends several measures, including strik-

ing labour mobility pacts such as the one announced between B.C. and Alberta in April.

However, representatives of B.C.'s red-hot construction sector say that even international markets for skilled trades are exceptionally tight and are expected to stay that way — leaving B.C. to compete not only against Alberta, but countries across the globe as well.

Keith Sashaw, president of the Vancouver Regional Construction Association, noted that last March he attended four immigration fairs in Europe, where B.C. is now looking for recruits in the skilled trades.

"Certainly the availability of skilled labour is one of the major concerns of any contractor right now," Sashaw said. "No doubt we are competing with Alberta for workers, and that is one of the big challenges that B.C. construction companies are facing."

Construction sector employment is up 9.9 per cent in the year to date — representing 8,700 additional workers com-

pared to 2005 — amid an "absolutely unprecedented" construction boom.

There are more than 80,000 construction workers in the Vancouver area. Two years ago, there were less than 60,000.

Sashaw said at least another 20,000 workers are required, adding that other employers, notably in the hospitality sector, are expressing concern about losing their recruits to the construction sector.

"One of the challenges everybody in B.C. is wrestling with right now is that it's not just one or two sectors of the economy. We are seeing across-the-board demand," he said.

Wages start at around \$10-\$12 for an unskilled recruit, reaching \$35-\$38 per hour, plus benefits, for a fully certified tradesperson.

Sashaw said his industry has been urging the federal government to move quickly to open the doors to temporary foreign workers via streamlining of processes to approve their credentials.

"Right now, it's a cumber-

some process if you want to be bringing in foreign workers. There are a lot of forms to fill out and hoops to jump through in terms of demonstrating a need for foreign workers."

One of the key problems, noted Greater Vancouver Home Builders Association president Peter Simpson, is that Ottawa does not recognize the construction sector in its foreign worker program.

"Construction workers are not included on the list of occupations under the temporary foreign worker program. That really needs to be looked at," Simpson said.

"It's hard getting trades to come from other provinces because they are busy there. This isn't just a national challenge. It's an international challenge."

"The days are long gone when we could take our pick of the world's labour."

"I know that England has seen some construction projects delayed because they don't have the requisite workers to complete them."

"They're getting workers from Poland and other European Union countries so they can complete the projects."

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# Ultra-luxurious condo sells for record \$10 million

BY BRUCE CONSTANTINEAU  
VANCOUVER SUN

**REAL ESTATE** | A luxurious two-storey penthouse condo overlooking Stanley Park has been sold for a record price of about \$10 million — \$2 million above the previous Vancouver condo record of \$7.75 million paid for a Coal Harbour penthouse suite last year.

Vancouver developer Robert Quigg confirmed Tuesday that his massively renovated 4,200-square-foot condo at 2088 Barclay Street was sold last month to an unnamed buyer. He wouldn't provide any other details but the 14-year-old unit in The Presidio at Stanley Park had a hefty asking price of \$9.8 million.

"The property sold last month and there's a firm and binding contract in place," Quigg said in an interview. "Other than that, I can't comment on anything."

Land registry documents show the high-end luxury homebuilder bought the condo in January 2004 for \$2 million. He gutted the unit to its concrete shell and spent an estimated \$6 million on extensive interior and exterior renovations before putting it on the market early this year.

The penthouse — with floor-to-ceiling windows that offer panoramic views of Vancouver's West End — features heated limestone floors, a stainless steel staircase, five balconies, handwoven wool carpets, custom-built furnishings (like a lacquered goatskin table), a media room and wine coolers that can store up to 800 bottles. The original drywall and paint interiors were replaced with limed oak panelling.

Quigg said the market for high-end condos in Vancouver remains strong, noting that his company



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The Presidio at 2088 Barclay.

brought 64 units to the market this year at prices ranging from \$1.5 million to \$10 million and only 11 remain unsold. The units won't be ready for occupancy until this fall and the summer of 2007.

"There's very strong demand from local buyers," Quigg said. "The market at the high end is much less investor-driven and people are looking to live in the product."

Before the sale of The Presidio penthouse, the highest prices paid for Vancouver condos included the \$7.75-million sale of the yet-to-be built penthouse at Two Harbour Green near Coal Harbour and the \$7.4 million paid for a penthouse at the Shangri-La development to be built near Georgia and Thurlow. Quigg said the market might experience a drop in the number of high-end condos sold in the next 12 months.

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## Raising kids in a condo gaining acceptance

Vancouverites the most likely to call a condo the family home

CALGARY — Canadians seem to be increasingly open to raising a family while living in a condominium, a new survey shows.

An Ipsos Reid survey, conducted for TD Bank, showed that 11 per cent of Vancouver residents currently live in a condo, the highest in the country. The figure for Calgary and Ottawa is eight per cent, Toronto is at seven per cent and Montreal is at six.

But residents of Vancouver (47 per cent) and Toronto (42 per cent) are more likely than those who live in Ottawa (35 per cent), Calgary (32 per cent) or Montreal (25 per cent) to say they would consider purchasing a condominium as a primary residence.

"Attitudes towards families and condos may be shifting among younger people in urban centres," said Chris Wisniewski, a group product manager in real estate secured lending for TD

Canada Trust. "Younger Canadians who bought condos as their first step into the housing markets have grown accustomed to the numerous benefits of the condo lifestyle."

The survey, conducted from April 27 to May 12 among 2,125 adults aged 25-59 living in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa, asked respondents if they would consider living in a condo if they were planning to start a family and raise children.

The survey found Montrealers are most likely to say they would not consider raising a family in a condo (87 per cent) and most likely to express the view that condominiums are not suitable places for families with children. They are followed by Calgary (84 per cent) and Ottawa (79 per cent).

People in Vancouver and Toronto are the most likely to consider raising a family in a condo. Some 28 per cent and 23 per cent respectively in those cities appeared to be in favour of raising kids in a condo.

Calgary Herald

**SECURITIES** | The British Columbia Securities Commission has permanently banned a U.S. man from trading in the province after he admitted trading stock in a criminal scheme through a Vancouver-based broker.

The provincial securities watchdog said Tuesday it has

reached a settlement agreement with Derrick Cleveland, a former stock trader in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Under the terms of the deal, Cleveland is also barred from acting as a director or officer of any issuer or engage in any investor relations activities in B.C.

On July 17, 2002, Cleveland

pleaded guilty in a New York court to conspiracy to enter into a racketeering enterprise involving securities fraud.

As part of that case, he admitted that from around February 2000 to May 2002, he was involved in a conspiracy to use information from confidential law enforcement and other sources for the purpose of finan-

cial gain.

"The information was used to trade stock and extort stock from companies for less than market value," the BCSC said in a release.

Cleveland traded some of the stock through brokerage accounts at Global Securities Corp. in Vancouver.

Canadian Press



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