

NATION BRIEFS

Union must be part of auto sector rescue: Ottawa

OTTAWA (Reuters)—The Canadian Auto Workers union needs to co-operate in any proposed government aid package for the struggling auto sector, Industry Minister Tony Clement said on Tuesday.

"It just stands to reason — and I think Canadians and auto workers would support this — (that) if we're in a situation where the Canadian government is coming to the table, where the manufacturers and the executives are coming to the table, then I think it's in that spirit of co-operation that we would like the CAW at the table too," he told reporters.

On Monday, CAW President Ken Lewenza, speaking to the National Post newspaper, rejected calls for union members to accept more job cuts as part of any aid package.

"A lot of things that we considered rock solid in terms of our positions in the past have had to become a little bit more amenable to change ... I think it behooves all of us to be very open to considering our past positions," Clement said when asked about Lewenza's comments.

The government says it is in theory prepared to help the sector but will not contemplate short-term solutions.

Clement is due to visit Washington and Detroit soon for talks on how to handle the auto sector's woes.

World's oldest polar bear dies

VANCOUVER (Reuters)—Zoo officials in Winnipeg on Tuesday were mourning the death of what is believed to be the world's oldest polar bear.

The 42-year-old bear named Debby died on Monday at a zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she had lived since 1967 after being captured as an orphaned cub in the Russian Arctic in 1966.

Debby was in declining health due to her advanced age, and veterinarians decided to euthanize her after it was discovered she had suffered multiple organ failure.

She was listed as the world's oldest polar bear by the Guinness Book of World Records when she turned 41, according to officials at the Assiniboine Park Zoo.

Debby gave birth to six cubs at the zoo where she lived for many years with a male bear, Skipper, who died several years ago at age 34, according to the zoo.

Polar bears in the wild can live more than 30 years, but most do not survive even to age 20.

Canada wants North America cap-and-trade system

OTTAWA (Reuters)—The Conservative government, shifting positions in the wake of Barack Obama's election as U.S. president, said on Wednesday that it would work to develop a North America-wide cap-and-trade system to limit emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Conservatives, who walked away from the Kyoto protocol on climate change after taking power in 2006, have until now focused on cutting the intensity of emissions rather than imposing outright curbs.

"We will work with the provincial governments and our partners to develop and implement a North America-wide cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases," the government said as it unveiled plans for the new session of Parliament.

Obama favors much tougher greenhouse gas reduction targets than those set by the Conservatives, and says he will start a cap-and-trade system.

Green groups said the Conservatives' new positioning is largely academic as Canada would likely go along with whatever approach the new U.S. administration takes because the U.S. economy is around 10 times the size of Canada's.

"I think we will be forced into a North American-wide cap-and-trade system that will basically be dictated by Washington.... It's the only system that can work. We've got an integrated economy," said Stephen Hazell, executive director of Sierra Club Canada.

Alberta — the bedrock of the Conservative party — strongly opposes the idea of a cap-and-trade system, and Ottawa's plan was quickly attacked by provincial Premier Ed Stelmach as too risky.

"We've just come through the world's worst financial crisis where people were not telling the truth about the risk ... who's thinking here?" said Stelmach, complaining that Alberta was not told in advance about the announcement.

Space agency awards design contract for satellite fleet

By CINDY CHAN
Epoch Times Ottawa Staff

Canada's space agency awarded a \$40-million contract last Friday to the company that operates Radarsat-2, Canada's earth observation satellite, to design the satellite's successors.

MacDonald Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. (MDA), based in Richmond, B.C., received the 16-month contract to complete the preliminary design of the Radarsat Constellation Mission (RCM), a fleet of three satellites that can potentially add three more to its configuration.

"The development of this constellation will support the government in its efforts to assure sustainable development, manage natural resources, and exercise security and sovereignty, especially in the Arctic," said Canadian Space Agency (CSA) President Steve MacLean in a statement.

"It will also allow Canada to continue to contribute significantly to global disaster management and rescue efforts."

Radarsat-1, launched in November 1995, was the first satellite able to operate day and night and in all weather conditions, seeing through snow and ice, clouds, haze, and smoke.

Launched last December, Radarsat-2 produces clearer images faster and can survey an area more precisely.

Ensuring data continuity, the first RCM satellite will launch in 2014, about the same timeframe as the end of Radarsat-2's design lifetime. The second and third satellites will launch in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The three will be smaller and lighter than Radarsat-2 and will fly equally spaced in a 600-km low Earth orbit, 200 kilometres lower than Radarsat-2.

Operating together, the satel-

lites will enable greater coverage, backup redundancy, and new applications to augment their primary uses of maritime surveillance, disaster management, and ecosystem monitoring, said Savi Sachdev, director general of space programs for CSA.

While the Radarsat-2 was owned and operated by MDA, Canada's largest aerospace company, Mr. Sachdev said the Canadian government will own the Constellation and will be its biggest user. However, private industry will continue to be able to generate revenue by marketing the data internationally, he said.

Radarsat-2 monitors shipping as well as ice and other environmental conditions and is widely hailed for its use in protecting Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

In January when MDA proposed to sell its space division to Minneapolis-based arms and aerospace

giant Alliant Techsystems Inc., critics warned that the foreign takeover would put Canadian sovereignty at risk.

Then-Industry Minister Jim Prentice blocked the sale saying he was not satisfied it would bring "net benefits" to Canada.

The \$1.3-billion sale would have included Radarsat-2 as well as the Canadian Canadarm and Dextre space robotics technology.

However, Mr. Sachdev said Canadian government ownership is unrelated to the earlier potential sale of Radarsat-2.

"Keeping ownership of a satellite like this within the Canadian government gives us better ability to be able to share the data with our international partners and also globally for the public good," said Mr. Sachdev.

Along with 74 other countries and the European Commission, Canada and the U.S. are members of an in-

ternational initiative to build a global earth observation network.

This week some 300 officials from the Group on Earth Observations, established in 2005, met in Bucharest, Romania to plan the next three-year phase of a ten-year plan to build the network.

The Global Earth Observation System of Systems will link together satellites, weather stations, ocean buoys, seismic monitors, and other technologies into one comprehensive "system of systems." It aims to help countries address global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water shortage, disease epidemics, and natural disasters.

"[Through this system] Earth observation data can be made available to developing countries that do not have their own satellites," Mr. Sachdev said.

CSA is expected to release a new long-term space plan in the coming weeks.

Canadian 'recyclers' illegally exporting electronic waste

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In crude operations, unprotected workers use fire and mercuric acid baths to extract the precious metals from the e-waste. The fire produces clouds of acrid smoke which, according to the documentary, releases polychlorinated and polybrominated dioxins — some of the most toxic compounds on earth.

The acid residue is dumped in the local river which is contaminated beyond redemption. Drinking water now has to be trucked into Guiyu which, before becoming a dump for much of the world's e-waste, was a small, rice-growing village.

Although China banned the import of e-waste in 1996, an estimated one million tons of it are treated in Guiyu yearly by 5500 family-based operations, supporting 100,000 migrant workers. Scientific studies have found that 80 per cent of Guiyu's children have dangerously high levels of lead in their blood, and pregnancies are six times more likely to end in miscarriage.

A recent CBC documentary showed ocean-going containers of e-waste leaving Vancouver bound for Hong Kong. According to BAN's research, since 2001 unscrupulous Canadian recyclers have been exporting hazardous electronic scrap to developing countries even though the practice is illegal in Canada.

Although Canada is a signatory to the Basel Convention, Puckett says enforcement is lax, and loopholes in existing laws mean they are not very effective.

In the only known enforcement effort to date (Environment Canada doesn't talk publicly about its investigations), 50 containers loaded with about 500,000 kg of e-waste destined for China and Hong Kong were seized at the Port of Vancouver in 2006. The 27 companies involved were fined \$2,000 apiece under the Customs Act, but the company

names were not revealed.

Requests for an interview with Environment Canada for this story were acknowledged, but comments were not received by deadline.

The U.S., says Puckett, is "even worse than Canada" in that it only has a "really weak" law on the export of cathode ray tubes, which contain lead.

In September, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a report denouncing the lack of government controls and enforcement over e-waste exports. BAN and the Electronic TakeBack Coalition are pursuing federal legislation to ban national exports.

By stringently implementing the Basel Convention, the European Union has banned the export of all hazardous waste and has recently made strides toward forcing manufacturers to phase out the use of toxic compounds in their products.

With Guiyu's e-waste industry estimated to be worth \$140 million, it comes as no surprise that organized crime would have a finger in the pie. RCMP Commissioner William Elliott told the Vancouver Board of Trade last Wednesday that some crime groups in Canada are involved in the illegal disposal of e-waste.

"It's actually cost-effective to ship this stuff half-way round the world," says Ifny Lachance, coordinator and co-founder of Free Geek Vancouver, a non-profit e-waste reuse and recycling centre.

"If you have to deal with it here in North America, with more stringent regulations it's a bit more of a pricey undertaking. However, that is what we should be focusing on — we should be creating Canadian jobs by recycling it here because ultimately under the Basel Convention our waste is our responsibility."

Alberta was the first Canadian province to enact legislation in

2004, opening 75 centres to deal with e-waste. Electronics Produce Stewardship Canada, which was created by the electronics industry to bring together government and private stakeholders to initiate an e-waste program, introduced a national recycling program in 2006.

However, Free Geek Vancouver and Redemtech are the only two electronics recyclers in Canada that have been approved as e-Stewards, a program initiated by BAN that has rigorous standards and is soon to be fully accredited and certified. E-Stewards make sure the "downstream waste" that leaves their facilities is recycled responsibly and not exported.

"It's really hard to get," says Lachance. "We wanted to get it because the bad guys couldn't get it and they couldn't lie their way into getting it and they couldn't buy it. It's a very pure standard."

The first operation of its kind in Canada, Free Geek Vancouver focuses on re-use and "employs" more than 750 volunteers. In return for 24 hours of their time, volunteers receive a refurbished desktop computer and Free Geek also provides equipment to non-profits through their Hardware Grant Foundation.

The idea is to have as many computers as possible "flow back into the community," says Lachance. Two-thirds of Free Geek's revenue comes from its computer thrift store and a third from selling scrap.

Ten years ago, the average life span of a computer was six years. Today it's two. According to the 60 Minutes documentary, about 130,000 computers are thrown out every day in the U.S. Over 100 million cell phones are discarded annually. A U.S. government-mandated switch to digital broadcasting in February 2009 is expected to result in a flood of discarded TVs into the waste stream.



Woman in Guiyu smashes a cathode ray tube from a computer monitor in order to remove the copper laden yoke at the end of the funnel. Monitor glass contains lead but the biggest hazard is the inhalation of the highly toxic phosphor dust coating inside. The glass is later dumped in irrigation canals and along the river where it leaches lead into the groundwater. BASEL ACTION NETWORK 2006

Lachance says that apart from "people who have to be on the cutting edge," nobody should be buying new computers. Manufacturers have to be pressured to stop using toxic materials and recyclers need to put more effort into promoting the re-use of discarded computers.

"If we're going to talk about ethical recycling, anyone who's not focused on re-use as a first priority is not doing ethical recycling," she says. "A Pentium 4 getting destroyed in a smelter breaks my heart when someone down the street could be using it."

'Dress for Success' challenge encourages corporate responsibility

By JUSTINA WHEALE
Epoch Times Vancouver Staff

VANCOUVER—The annual "Dress Me For Success" corporate challenge ended recently in Vancouver with a fashion show, raffle prizes, and an auction, all to raise money for disadvantaged women.

Dress for Success (DFS) is a charity that helps low-income women transition into the workforce by providing professional attire and career support.

Hosted by CTV's Keri Adams,



Participants at the "Dress Me For Success" corporate challenge wearing outfits they put together after a scavenger hunt at the Pacific Palisades Hotel in Vancouver. JUSTINA WHEALE/THE EPOCH TIMES

the corporate challenge got companies involved in social responsibility by competing against each other to raise the most money by selling raffle tickets and collecting clothing for donation.

The finalists then competed on Thursday in a scavenger hunt at the Pacific Palisades Hotel to find items of clothing hidden around the hotel and assemble a business-appropriate outfit to model for the judges.

Competitors included BC Hydro, Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP, Ernst & Young, McNeill Nakamoto Recruitment Group, Pacific Palisades Hotel, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, and Terason Gas.

The winner of both the fashion show and the "most money raised per employee" segment of the challenge was McNeill Nakamoto, a Vancouver-based recruitment firm.

McNeill Nakamoto's founder, Cheryl Nakamoto, got involved in order to find a way to support women. She believes corporations have a responsibility to genuinely give back — not just to boost their reputation, but from their hearts.

"I learned through doing charity work that you don't force people to do anything, they have to want to do it... It's not that when you do something for charity you want something back, it's not that," said Nakamoto.

"[Corporations] should really look for organizations where they align themselves, what they are passionate about. So it has to come from their heart... they can talk about what charity means a lot to them, where they feel a connection, and then from there they can make a contribution and they can reach out."

Since 1999, the Dress For Success Vancouver Professional Women's Group has provided resources to help clients build successful careers with networking and education programs. Areas of education include everything from accessorizing an outfit to improving self-esteem and practical skills training.

The programs are aimed at directly addressing the clients' social and economic needs to promote financial independence and self-sufficiency.

"We're looking at times where people are constantly looking for good help and don't seem to understand why they can't find it."

With over 200 volunteers, DFS relies largely on community resources to make it work. Debra Twocock, executive director of Vancouver's DFS chapter, appreciates the support they have received from corporations but would like to see more.

"It's a bit of a slow process. I would say that where the corporate world is governed by women, our roads happen much more quickly."

Twocock said that considering the costs of hiring and training and the fact that DFS provides sup-

port to help the women remain employed and to work through any initial problems, the program "should be much more highly regarded I think, by everyone in the corporate world."

"We're looking at times where people are constantly looking for good help and don't seem to understand why they can't find it. Well, we can tell them! We're really working to get the message out that there's a lot more to us than the clothing part — that a woman who is supported and can become productive will just take things and run."

Becky Knapton, DFS board member and chair of the corporate challenge this year, noted the importance of attitude in running a non-profit business.

"What does it take to make it successful? A lot of heart and hard work. Our staff is amazing, the dedication to what they do and to whom they provide really valuable services is great. And they make it fun to volunteer. I mean that's the difference I think; there's volunteering because you know it feels good and it's important and then there's volunteering because it's a fun thing to do. So it's a combination of that."

Dress for Success has helped more than 10,000 women in Vancouver alone and has affiliate locations in more than 85 cities across the United States, UK, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. To find out how you can get involved with DFS or with next year's corporate challenge please visit www.dressforsuccess.org/vancouver.