



## Chamber helps defeat U.S. protectionism

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Chambers of Commerce across Canada united in a campaign to reaffirm to our American neighbours the importance of free trade to economic recovery, and in doing so, successfully altered a "Buy American" provision in the recently enacted U.S. stimulus package. Thanks to these advocacy efforts, the provision was modified to require that existing international trade agreements not be violated, essentially eliminating the protectionist threat to Canada.

As a partner in this initiative, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce urged its members to contact U.S. suppliers and friends and explain why such a measure could backfire. They were also asked to contact their Senators and House representatives to have the "Buy American" provisions removed, or an exemption added for Canada.

"As the world has learned from past experience, protectionism impedes economy recovery, and economists and historians now blame protectionism in the 1930s to extending the severe economic downturn of the period," says Geoff Pradella, Vice-President of Public and Government Affairs with the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. "Given the highly integrated nature of the Canadian and U.S. economies, protectionist policies would lead to increased costs and trade disruptions, decreasing North American competitiveness, and resulting in job losses on both sides of the border.

"Canada's Ambassador to the United States Michael Wilson was equally engaged, writing to all U.S. Senators on this critical issue, and asking them to remove the provision.

As a result of this coordinated effort, U.S. President Barack Obama, in his press conference following the first visit to Canada since taking office, committed to resist calls for protectionism at home.