

Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council

Update Report October 2006

First In-person Board Meeting

With lots to accomplish in the day, some speed – and lots of organization – was called for at the first in-person meeting of the board of the Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council. Directors and guests met for most of the day on Friday, October 20, to complete all kinds of business and to initiate development of a strategic plan to guide the Council for the next 18 months.

Some 30 people from across Canada participated in the meeting, indicating the high level of interest that exists in the sector for the work being undertaken by the Council. As well as board members, attendees included the leaders of several Canadian supply chain-related associations, members of the former Canadian Logistics Skills Committee – predecessor to the CSCSC – and guest speakers.

As Executive Director Kevin Maynard remarked during his report to the board, cultivation of relationships is central to Council activities; by linking together sector stakeholders, as was done at this meeting, the Council is well prepared to achieve its mandate and goals.

Necessary business to complete included officially accepting the slate of directors and committee members, reviewing and approving by-laws, and going over and approving core-infrastructure and project budgets and financial plans. Having put the last touches on these and other administrative elements, the CSCSC is now set to focus on strategic development and implementation, to move from study to action, as we initiate projects and develop concepts for further funding.

TASC Presentation: Sector Councils' Work is Unique, Necessary and Well-received

The Alliance of Sector Councils, to which the CSCSC has applied for full membership, consists of 30+ members. TASC's Executive Director, Andrew Cardozo, provided an overview of the work done both by TASC and by individual councils.

One of TASC's responsibilities is to keep sector councils visible to all federal political parties so that, when a change of government takes place, it does not adversely affect the sector council program. The current Conservative government is becoming increasingly supportive of the program; TASC's appearances before government working committees and in meetings with HRSDC have indicated that the government is on side. All current federal political parties support the program.

Member councils work closely with industry partners to address their respective sectors' human resources challenges. Labour-market shortages are one important issue affecting many Canadian sectors; councils, with their hands-on, direct-approach solutions, are working to make a difference so that Canadian companies can compete more effectively in the international marketplace.

The CSCSC has been involved in TASC, as a developing sector council, for 2½ years. The Council's application to become a full member will be voted on at a TASC meeting in February 2007. TASC's decision will not affect the Council's relationship with or funding from HRSDC.

To find out more about TASC or member councils, visit www.councils.org.

Canada's Asia-Pacific Gateway and Transportation Corridor Initiative – Creating a Competitive Advantage

Barbara Gibbon, Acting Senior Economist with Transport Canada, outlined the work being done by the Government of Canada in this important initiative. Recognizing that supply chains and transportation are essential to competitiveness, and that Canadian business must contend with Asian companies whose presence in the market is growing at a phenomenal rate, Transport Canada is undertaking a long-term development plan that addresses the needs to both physically deal with the influx of Asian goods and enable Canadian manufacturers to increase their share of the market.

As well as being a challenge, Asian production growth presents an opportunity for Canada: our geographical location provides a theoretical benefit. Currently most ships from Asia go to the U.S., but the thinking is that if we can improve our transportation network, through the initiative's system-wide approach, Canada should capture a larger portion of that commerce through western ports.

This national project addresses the infrastructure needs of Canada's four western provinces. It will examine not only transportation requirements, but also taxation and operating processes, for example. On November 1, at a meeting in Vancouver – in which the CSCSC will participate – labour market issues will be examined.

Investment in highways and roads, as well as port infrastructure, is planned as part of this initiative. As well as creating a transportation corridor for the distribution of Asian goods, this investment will benefit Canadian manufacturers. Also, with shipping along the St. Lawrence River to Hamilton, Ont. increasingly becoming a focus of Transport Canada attention, pressure on roads and rail in this busy area will be alleviated, again helping Canadian companies with their transportation challenges.

Transport Canada's Barbara Gibbon asked that the CSCSC consider gateway issues, related skills challenges and key activities that could be undertaken to improve Canadian competitiveness. She posed the following questions to her audience at the meeting:

- What key skills/HR issues currently challenge the supply chain sector?
- How do these issues rank in terms of priority?
- What impact will these challenges have on the ability of the supply chain sector to respond to possible increases in demand for services in the context of the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor initiative?
- What key activities could be undertaken by industry/associations/governments to address skills and labour market issues in the supply chain sector? Where could modest investments be most effective, and how could industry/associations/governments collaborate to leverage the most benefit?

Your responses to these questions would be helpful to the Council; a summary of the thoughts of our stakeholders will be presented by the CSCSC at the November 1 meeting with Transport Canada related to this project. Please send your answers to Kevin Maynard, at kmaynard@supplychaincanada.org, by October 31.

Development of a Strategic Plan

The afternoon's work required more deliberation by participants.

An outline presented by facilitator John Allen provided a starting point for discussion. With three hours to produce the basis of the Council's strategic plan, attendees had a lot to contemplate in a relatively short period:

- desired outcomes of the Council's efforts and related performance indicators to measure our success in their pursuit;
- short- and long-term goals;
- prioritization of objectives; and
- how to know that the Council's work is producing results and making a difference in the sector.

Participants came up with a list of eight top ways to measure the performance of the Council. Using these indicators, the Council will be able to evaluate the impact of our efforts in the sector. The chosen indicators will be included in the strategic-plan report to be prepared by John Allen.

Seeing improvement over the next few years in the areas identified by participants, we'll all know that our joint efforts through the Council are reaping rewards.