

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives

Three Decades of Public Policy Leadership

The *Canadian Council of Chief Executives* (CCCE) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan association composed of 150 chief executive officers and entrepreneurs of leading Canadian corporations from all major sectors and regions of the country. The Council began operations in 1977 as the *Business Council on National Issues* (BCNI).

The CCCE's mission is to focus the expertise and energies of Canada's private sector leaders on shaping sound fiscal, monetary, international trade, environmental, health, educational, governance and foreign and security policies that will build a stronger Canada and a better world.

The uniqueness and principal source of the CCCE's strength flows from the personal commitment and engagement of its member chief executives and entrepreneurs. Over the years, this has enabled the Council both to be a leader in developing and winning support for new ideas, and to react quickly and effectively to changing circumstances. The Council's approach to advocacy is founded on its members' dedication to building globally competitive Canadian enterprises and a more prosperous Canada.

The CCCE has been described as the world's most effective CEO-based organization dedicated to public policy development and solutions.

Membership and mandate

Membership in the CCCE is limited strictly to chief executives and entrepreneurs running large, private-sector enterprises. Council members lead companies that collectively administer C\$3.5 trillion in assets, have annual revenues in excess of C\$800 billion, and are responsible for the vast majority of Canada's exports, investment, research and development, and training.

In addition, the Council recognizes as Associate Members the elected chairs of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and the Conseil du patronat du Québec.

The CCCE has been widely recognized for its ability to forge consensus on complex issues. Emphasis in studies and deliberations is placed on achieving the best outcome for Canadian workers and enterprises, and for the country as a whole. Inherent in this approach is a rigorous adherence to the principle of non-partisanship. Advocacy of individual company or sectoral concerns is not within the Council's mandate.

Governance and operations

Governance and the overall direction of the Council is provided by the Board of Directors, a 24-member body which meets three times annually. The process of

developing policy, however, involves all members of the Council. The full membership meets three times each year to discuss priority issues and review progress on the Council's work programme. Members also participate in a variety of special events, task forces, roundtables and other initiatives relevant to the Council's mandate.

Day-to-day leadership of the Council is provided by the President and Chief Executive Officer working in concert with the Council's Chairman and with the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. An Ottawa-based staff provides policy research and supports the Council's committees and initiatives. The Council is funded entirely by its members.

Policy priorities and initiatives

Canada's economy has undergone a profound transformation since the late 1970s, and the Council is proud to have played a significant role in the shaping of national economic priorities over the past three decades. Council members have shown an unyielding commitment to policies that enhance Canada's standing in the world by strengthening the country's ability to compete internationally for jobs, investment and talent.

As its globe-and-maple-leaf logo suggests, the Council's policy interests include a wide range of issues both at home and abroad. Domestic issues are addressed primarily under the umbrella of Canadian competitiveness, a concept that encompasses fiscal and monetary policy, taxation, regulation, the environment, innovation, education, immigration, health care, social policy, defence and security, corporate governance and national unity.

In its early years, the Council campaigned successfully for changes in Canada's competition laws, foreign investment rules and energy policies – reforms that spurred business investment and economic growth. At the same time, the Council cast a spotlight on the danger of growing public sector deficits and debt, an effort that bore fruit in the 1990s when the government of the day committed itself to eliminating the federal deficit. During that same decade, the Council launched a series of initiatives to strengthen national unity, and was credited with conceiving and advancing the idea that evolved into the 1997 *Calgary Declaration*.

In recent years, the Council has continued to pursue an ambitious competitiveness agenda. Many of the Council's recommendations were captured in a paper titled *From Bronze to Gold: A Blueprint for Canadian Leadership in a Transforming World*, and in its 2008 submission to the federal *Competition Policy Review Panel*. The Panel agreed with the Council's call for a comprehensive competitiveness strategy.

Internationally, the CCCE maintains a strong focus on Canada's primary trade and investment relationships within North America. In the 1980s and the 1990s, the Council played a private sector leadership role in developing and promoting the *Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement* and the subsequent *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA). In the aftermath of the terrorist strikes of September 11, 2001, the CCCE helped spawn the *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America*, and more recently served as Canadian Secretariat to the *North American Competitiveness Council*, a trilateral private sector board that has provided advice to

the Prime Minister of Canada as well as the Presidents of both the United States and Mexico.

The CCCE is active globally on multilateral, regional and bilateral trade and investment issues. The Council has been a strong supporter of the Doha Development Agenda of the World Trade Organization, and of regional initiatives such as APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation). In 1997, the Council hosted the first ever *APEC CEO Summit*. In recent years, the Council has led CEO missions to China and to India, and it produced a joint study with Nippon Keidanren in 2006 recommending broader and deeper economic cooperation with Japan. In 2008, the CCCE and the Confederation of Indian Industry jointly produced a study recommending a comprehensive economic partnership. The Council also worked closely with its business counterparts in Europe to set the stage for the recent launch of negotiations on a broad partnership agreement between Canada and the European Union.

At home and abroad, the Council has consistently promoted environmental priorities. It was one of the first organizations to declare public support for the concept of sustainable development as articulated by the *World Commission on Environment and Development* (the “Brundtland Report”) in 1987, and played a key role in mobilizing Canadian business input to the 1992 *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro. It helped to shape the environmental side agreement to the NAFTA and was instrumental in establishing the 1996 *Voluntary Challenge and Registry* to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions. While critical of the lack of analysis and planning behind Canada’s commitment under the *Kyoto Protocol* of 1997, the Council has worked relentlessly to develop more effective alternatives. In October 2007, the Council released a major policy declaration, *Clean Growth: Building a Canadian Environmental Superpower*, which represented an unprecedented consensus on five key principles for addressing climate change.

The Council also has a long history of engagement in the foreign policy and defence and security domains. During the 1980s and 1990s, it advocated strongly for increased funding of the Canadian Forces. The CCCE believes that an effective military is essential to protect Canada’s sovereignty, to ensure that Canada can do its share in defending North America, and to make a meaningful contribution to global peace and security.

The secret to the Council’s impact across a wide policy range is its ability to be highly selective. As a general rule, the Council engages on an issue only when there is a consensus within the membership on three key criteria: the importance of the issue to the Council’s enterprises and to the country as a whole, the broad policy direction that is needed, and the ability of the Council to make a difference by taking action.

While the Council’s approach to advocacy varies with the issue and circumstances, the true measure of its success over the years is the extent to which senior decision-makers have sought its advice. The personal engagement of chief executives and leading entrepreneurs in the CCCE’s work enables it to speak credibly and with authority. At all times, the Council strives to be known for the quality of its policy work, for its dedication to the national interest and for its non-partisanship.

www.ceocouncil.ca

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