



THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
LA CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE DU CANADA

February 2, 2004

Canadian Chamber of Commerce reaction to the Speech from the Throne

Parliament returned today in Ottawa as Governor General Adrienne Clarkson read the *Speech from the Throne*. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce reviewed the speech and was pleased to see that it acknowledged several issues raised by the Canadian Chamber in our report to the government at the end of 2003. Further details from the government on its priorities are expected in a speech from Prime Minister Paul Martin, to be delivered to Parliament tomorrow starting at 10:45 A.M. EST. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce will also be providing reaction to that speech.

In our report titled, [*Realizing Canada's Full Potential*](#), the Canadian Chamber of Commerce presented Prime Minister Martin and his government with our priorities for the new government. Our recommendations focussed on fiscal policies and Canada-U.S. relations.

While the government announced measures in December to implement several of these recommendations, in today's speech it outlined its intention to address the following issues that are priorities for the members of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce:

Fiscal Policies:

- ✓ Unalterably reaffirmed commitment to fiscal prudence, including no deficits, program review, reallocation of resources from lower to higher priority programs, continued debt reduction.

Canada-U.S. Relations:

- ✓ Reaffirming its plans to put in place a more sophisticated approach to managing the Canada-U.S. relationship.
- ✓ Building on the success of the Smart Borders initiative, undertaking new approaches to managing the border, investing in border infrastructure and North American security.

Economic and Social Policies:

- ✓ Recognizing the need to streamline regulations governing business in Canada.
- ✓ Working with business and the scientific community to increase the development and commercialization of research, making Canada more innovative and competitive.
- ✓ Recognizing the importance of increasing access to capital for start-ups.



- ✓ Doing more to enable information and communications technology and biotechnology industries to grow in Canada.

Cities:

- ✓ Support for cities through full rebating of the Goods and Services Tax and to work with the provinces to share with municipalities a portion of the gas tax revenues or to determine other fiscal mechanisms which achieve the same goal.
- ✓ Move quickly to commit funds within the existing infrastructure programs.

Health Care Reform:

- ✓ Reforming the health care system to make it more accountable and to improve patient access.

Immigration:

- ✓ Ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials to ensure more successful integration of new immigrants into the economy.

Mentioned in the Speech from the Throne and the Canadian Chamber will be monitoring closely for impact on Canadian business:

Climate Change:

The government intends to respect its commitments to the Kyoto accord on climate change in a way that produces long-term enduring results while maintaining a strong and growing economy. It will do so by developing an equitable national plan in partnership with provincial, territorial governments and other stakeholders.

Not included in the Speech from the Throne but what the Canadian Chamber would like to have seen mentioned:

Tax Competitiveness:

The Canadian Chamber was disappointed that the government did not mention the need to remain competitive in terms of personal or corporate taxes. The Canadian Chamber has been calling for tax reform to be put back on the agenda.

