

NEWS

Made in China: Canadian Flag Pins

Nick Stewart
News Editor



This week it was revealed that lapel pins of the Canadian flag given out by Members of Parliament were no longer being made in Canada, instead being made in China. NDP MP Charlie Angus brought the matter forward on Wednesday, attacking the government for having Canadian symbols manufactured in China and demanded that all the pins be produced in Canada, where they have been for the past 35 years.

The minister for Public Works, Scott Brison, defended the practice at first, saying that the government strives to provide the best possible value for taxpayers, and later declared that China was not awarded the contract, that instead the contract was awarded to a Canadian company who outsourced the production to Chinese manufacturers. However, the decision to award the contract to companies who outsourced production to China comes at a price to the Canadian economy. Burson Designs, the company who has produced the pins since the 1960s laid off six of its employees after its bid for the contract was beaten by companies who outsourced the production of the lapel pins. Owner Ed Schnarr told the National Post that "it has affected jobs here. We'd like to see this type of thing exempted from the trade agreements. It's our national emblem, and there is a lot of pride and patriotism in that."

While Schnarr's hope that national symbols be exempt from trade

agreements are not realized, Angus insisted that items purchased for usage by MPs and senators were exempt from WTO treaties. On Friday, Brison acknowledged that such a provision is in fact in place and changed his policy.

"I have directed that Canadian pins made for the use of senators and members of Parliament will be manufactured in Canada from this point forward," Brison announced in the House of Commons.

While this serves as a sort of political victory for Charlie Angus, the battle is only partly won. He would like to see all national symbols produced in Canada.

"Scott Brison may think this flag fight stops here, but it doesn't. Not when Canadian symbols are still being shipped to overseas workers to manufacture," said Angus, referring to the outsourcing of military medals and insignia as well as Canadian postage stamps. "Today's move represents only half of the 6 million pins in production. All flag pins for all Canadians should be made in Canada, not only the pins handed out by parliamentarians."

For the time being, it appears the production of the rest of the lapel pins will continue to be outsourced to China, and the loss of 6 Canadian jobs does not appear to change. Although this is only a small example of outsourcing, it highlights the loss of employment in Canada as a result of the business practice.

NEWS SHORTS

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**Easter changes his stance on same sex marriage**

Island MP Wayne Easter appears to be having second thoughts on the bill introduced by the Liberal government which would change the definition of marriage to include same-sex marriage. He previously said he would support legislation changing the definition of marriage, but now, he has announced he is undecided. Charlottetown MP Shawn Murphy has yet to announce how he will vote as well. It is clear how the other two MPs from PEI will vote. Cardigan MP Lawrence MacAulay intends to vote against the bill, while Egmont MP Joe McGuire has been ordered by Prime Minister Martin to vote for the bill since he is a member of the Cabinet.

PEI government reveals \$125 million deficit

The provincial government has just announced the final financial numbers from the 2003-04 fiscal year: a whopping \$125 million deficit. This stands as the largest deficit ever posted by the provincial government. The total debt of the province now stands at \$1.3 billion. The opposition and the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce have harshly criticized the large deficit and are demanding the provincial government act quickly to control spending. The government has blamed the deficit on the collapse of Polar Foods and shortfalls in federal transfer payments.

What Post Secondary Education Means to the Government

On Monday, February 21 at 7:00 PM there will be a public forum regarding post secondary education. The event will be held at the Atlantic Veterinary College, Lecture Theater A.

The forum will be put on by the UPEI Student Union and will consist of a panel of guest speakers and moderated by Clare Henderson, President of UPEI Student Union, to lead the discussion. Invited parties are Shawn Murphy, Member of Parliament for Charlottetown, the Honorable Robert Ghiz, Leader of the Opposition, Senator Elizabeth Hubley, the Honorable Mitch Murphy, Minister of Treasury, and the Honorable Mildred Dover, Minister of Education. To date, confirmation has been received from all invited parties with the exception of Minister Murphy.



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