

Progress Made in Developing Common Standards for Plywood

The development of common Canada-U.S. standards for plywood and other wood-based sheathing panels has entered an important new stage.

The process of developing the new standards has been under way since 1988, under the guidance of the Binational Committee on Plywood Standards (BNC). The process over which the BNC is presiding is aimed at resolving the long-standing bilateral issue of plywood standards through the inclusion of common standards in building codes in the two countries.

The process has included a joint binational project to generate technical information needed to develop the common standards. On the basis of the test results, the Binational Committee recommended changes to both the Canadian and U.S. standards, and a joint Canada-U.S. drafting group was established in March 1990 to draft common standards for plywood.

The drafting is now complete and the draft standards have been endorsed by the BNC and submitted to the national standards bodies in both countries—the Canadian Standards Association and the National Institute of Standards and Technology—for adoption as national standards.

Over the coming months, these two organizations will be subjecting the draft standards to the consensus approval processes, and once approved, the standards will be submitted for adoption into building codes in both countries.

The U.S. withheld Free Trade Agreement (FTA) tariff cuts on plywood, waferboard, oriented strand board and particle board on January 1, 1989 pending development of common Canada-U.S. standards for plywood and other construction sheathing products. Canada has withheld tariff cuts on the same products.

The U.S. FTA implementing legislation allows the cuts to proceed only when the common standards

have been "sufficiently incorporated" in building codes in the two countries.

For more information, contact Jim Ross, United States Trade Relations Division, EAITC. Tel.: (613) 991-3215. Fax: (613) 996-7411.

U.S. Merchandise Processing Fee Extended

Amendments to the U.S. Merchandise Processing Fee went into effect on October 1, 1990.

The amendments were in response to a GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) panel finding of two years ago.

They extend the fee on U.S. imports—which had expired on September 30—for another year at the previous ad valorem rate of 0.17 per cent and add a maximum fee of \$400 as well as a minimum fee of \$21.

On October 26, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

In addition to extending the fee through to 1995, the legislation provides for the adjustment of the ad valorem rate to no higher than 0.19 per cent or no lower than 0.15 per cent—the determination of the rate must be justified to Congress as offsetting the cost of Customs service.

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) provides for the elimination in equal stages of the user fee for shipments originating in Canada within five years of implementation. The first reduction was implemented January 1, 1990. The fee on Canadian shipments will be eliminated completely by January 1, 1994.

For more information on the fee, contact Mike Robertson, United States Trade Relations Division (UET), EAITC. Tel.: (613) 990-9180. Fax: (613) 996-7441.

Trade Commissioner Receives Award

Senior Trade Commissioner Paul Desbiens, formerly at the Canadian Consulate in Buffalo, received a Merit Award Certificate for his outstanding contribution to the development and implementation of the highly successful New Exporters to Border States Program (NEBS). The award was presented to him by Minister for International Trade John C. Crosbie during a luncheon ceremony for External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC) Trade Commissioners. Desbiens is Director of EAITC's United States Trade and Tourism Development Division (UTO). For more information on the NEBS Program, contact EAITC's Info Export. Fax: (613) 996-9709.



Paul Desbiens (left) with Minister Crosbie

Exposition Services' Role in Trade Fairs

Firms participating in international trade shows—especially in the U.S.—under the Canadian banner will become increasingly familiar with a key player in the field.

The Canada Communication Group - Expositions & Audio-Visual Services (EAVS)—formerly part of Supply and Services Canada—recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with EAITC's United States Trade, Tourism and Investment Development Bureau (UTD) for the provision of trade fair participation services.

Services to be offered by EAVS include recruitment of and contact with participants. EAVS

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