

Business positive about investing

Business executives have become positive about investment conditions, the Conference Board in Canada reports.

In a second-quarter survey of business attitudes and investment spending intentions, the board said 58 per cent of the respondents indicated that the present was a good time to undertake investment in new plants and equipment. Only 43 per cent in the first quarter and 30 per cent in the 1978 second quarter made similar statements.

It was the highest level of positive responses for any quarter since the survey was initiated two-and-a-half years ago.

The survey said 13 per cent of the executives thought the present was a bad time to invest, down from 22.5 per cent in the first quarter and 36 per cent in the 1978 second quarter.

The board attributed the improved sentiment to higher plant operating rates and improved profit performance. These trends more than offset concerns about rising wage costs and a moderate softening of the sales outlook, the board said.

European Community studies Canadian energy program

Representatives of the Commission of the European Community (EC) and technical experts from EC member states recently attended a seminar in Ottawa, examining the Canadian energy bus program. The energy bus is a joint federal-provincial program intended to assist companies and institutions in Canada to reduce energy costs and to improve efficiency of energy use.

The energy bus, equipped with two mini-computers, measuring instruments, demonstration equipment and video units, and staffed by a team of engineers and technicians, performs on-site computerized energy audits for participants.

The week-long seminar, conducted by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, took place under the EC-Canada Framework Agreement for Economic and Commercial Co-operation. The EC team visited four of the provinces operating buses (Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia) to observe energy audits.

Sex bias widespread, OECD says

Sex discrimination is still practised in major industrial countries, despite many attempts to further equality for women, says a report by the International Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However, Canada is considered more advanced.

Women are still significantly under-paid and under-employed and they are discriminated against in pensions and other key social services, says the 24-country OECD, which includes Canada.

As a result, "human resources are being wasted in a way in which few other resources are wasted in an efficient industrial society," concludes the recently released report.

OECD countries are failing to come to grips with "the unprecedented influx of women, particularly married women, into the labour force on what clearly appears to be a permanent basis," it says.

The report was written by the OECD's working party on the role of women in the economy. The group was headed for a number of months by long-time feminist and labour-force expert, Sylva Gelber of Toronto.

Despite laws barring hiring and pay discrimination, women are still by and large ending up in the lower ranks of the work force, the report says.

"Women are concentrated in a narrower range of jobs than men and the jobs they fill are lower paid, less skilled and require less education and training... entire industries have come to depend upon the availability of cheap and comparatively unskilled labour largely supplied by women."

Much of the problem, the report says, stems from education systems that continue to stereotype women and fail to encourage them to branch out into traditionally male fields.

"Women still very rarely become physicists, electricians, technicians and mathematicians," said Enise Lecoultre, an OECD contributor to the report.

Mrs. Lecoultre believes Canada emerges as a "progressive country" on women's issues. "I think you are very far advanced," she said.

By 1975, about 50 per cent of the working-age women in Canada were in the work force, compared with a high of 68 per cent in Sweden and a low of 31 per cent in Italy and Greece, the report says.

Canada-U.S. co-operate in military exercise



A U.S. Cobra helicopter from Ansbach, Germany, hovers over a Leopard tank from the Royal Canadian Dragoons during a recent anti-armour helicopter exercise with the Canadian Forces' 444 Tactical Helicopter Squadron in Westheim, Germany. The ten-day exercise stressed co-operation between the two NATO allies as Canadian Forces' observation helicopters searched for the "enemy" and guided the heavily armoured Cobras onto the target. The Royal Canadian Dragoons and 444 Tactical Helicopter Squadron are two units of the 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group based at Lahr, Germany.

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