

Chamber worries about local jobs if U.S. retaliates over Chinese steel

China's steel-dumping is costing jobs in Essex County, but Canada's Chamber of Commerce is worried U.S. trade retaliation could cost more.



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Smoke billows from a large steel plant in China in this Nov. 4, 2016, file photo. Critics cite lax domestic Chinese environmental and labour laws as factors in China's 'dumping' of cheap steel in North America. *KEVIN FRAYER*

China's alleged steel-dumping on North America might be costing jobs in Essex County, but the Canadian Chamber of Commerce wants to make sure the Trump administration's trade response doesn't add further local pain.

"We're concerned about any collateral damage if the U.S. retaliates," said Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The local chamber co-sponsored a motion that passed at this year's national chamber annual general meeting recommending Canada be exempt from a trade investigation launched by the USA seeking penalties for steel dumping.

In a phone interview with the Star on Monday from the national chamber's AGM in Fredericton, NB., Marchand said Atlas Tube, one of Essex County's biggest employers, could increase production "by a third or more," bringing with it additional local jobs and investment, were the steel dumping from abroad to end.

"We want to make sure we have the same set of rules," said Marchand.

The local chamber of commerce co-sponsored a number of other resolutions at the two-day meeting that began on Sunday, among them a call on Ottawa to "conduct an annual inventory of the most important foreign barriers affecting Canadian exports of goods and services."

Concerns over the Liberal government's plan to revamp the federal business tax regime, and its impact on small business, also prompted a call by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for a royal commission on Ottawa's tax reform proposals.

"The finance minister drops a massive tax change bill in the summer, after the House rose, with an early deadline — we are very disappointed," said Marchand. "The small business sector is already under siege with Ontario's policies," he added.

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