

Canada in harmony

Re: Is Canada a Country?, Sean McPhee and Carole Presseault, Sept. 6

As top finance professionals, Ontario's Chartered Accountants support measures to enhance trade, investment and labour mobility within Canada. In fact, inter-provincial — and international — mobility is already guaranteed for CAs because our internationally recognized standards for qualification and conduct are harmonized in every province.

However, if we agree to level playing fields in other areas, we need to be clear on the level at which new Canada-wide occupational standards are set. Take the practice of public accounting, for example: Currently, some provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec, have standards for practice that meet the requirements of the United States and our other major trading partners, while other provinces have been content to have lower or, in some cases, no standards for qualification in jurisdictions that allow non-CAs to practice.

It is simply not enough to reconcile occupational standards between Canadian jurisdictions if that means engendering a "race to the bottom" — diluting standards to the point that they effectively drop below those required to protect investors and our capital markets and match those of our major trading partners. It's of no benefit to Canada to lower interprovincial trade barriers while simultaneously raising international ones.

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