

## **Canadian company seeks U.S. address Trying to counteract trade protectionism**

MARTIN CASH (feat. COLIN ROBERTSON)

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The 'buy America' sentiment is so strong in the U.S. heartland it's forcing some Canadian companies to pursue U.S. acquisitions just to get an American address.

At a trade summit organized by the Manitoba office of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters on Tuesday, Craig McIntosh, CEO of Acrylon Plastics, said potential U.S. customers, for the first time in 20 years, are telling him they'd rather buy from an American supplier.

This new-found buy America patriotism is over and above any legislated American content provisions that have existed in the bus industry for years.

That's why McIntosh has been on the hunt for a toehold in the increasingly protectionist, but massive, market.

"We're up to bat for the fourth time right now and I hope we'll get to the finish line with this one," McIntosh said of his efforts to buy an American company.

And he makes no effort to hide the rationale for such an acquisition.

"It would be for tactical reasons," he said. "It's an operational manufacturing company (that is being targeted), but we want a U.S. address."

And this is coming from a company that is now the largest North American plastics supplier for Case New Holland and the company that built the plastic slide installed on the White House grounds for the Obama children in 2009.

"It's the first time in the 15 to 20 years I have been doing this stuff that I have felt this," he said. "It used to be we were greeted as friends."

Now, he said, there are some who lump Canada in with China and Mexico as countries that are taking American jobs.

"With a U.S. address, we can be seen creating American jobs and that will overcome some of the fears," he said.

Lloyd Begin, national sales manager for McKenzie and Associates, a sales agency that represents American companies in the Canadian market, agrees there is a growing sense American companies want to do what they can to help their struggling economy.

"It's a pride issue in the U.S.," Begin said. "I don't know how pervasive it is, but Americans used to be at the top of the heap, now they're no better than Europe."

Colin Robertson, a former senior Canadian diplomat and now a consultant and vice-president of the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, was one of the architects of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

He said while there is a growing awareness in the United States about economic challenges the country has to face, there are some advantages for Canadians doing business there.

"For one thing, Americans like Canadians," he said. "Also, Canada is the largest export customer for 34 U.S. states. American jobs depend on their exports to Canada."

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird recently said as many as eight million jobs in the United States are supported by trade with Canada.

Robertson said he believes an announcement is imminent on the completion of the Beyond the Border initiative, a bilateral initiative designed to speed up trade and travel between Canada and the United States, as well as enhancing security.