

NEWS BRIEFS

NEW CONCERNS WHEN ENTERING U.S.

Toronto — The United States is going ahead with new visa requirements expected to affect more than half a million Canadian permanent residents. From an HR perspective it will be important to identify these employees in advance to ensure they are not turned away at the airport or border on what in the past would have been routine travel to the U.S., said immigration lawyer Nan Berezowski. Permanent residents from about 50 countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and South Africa will soon need visas to enter the U.S. For more information visit www.hrreporter.com, select "search" and enter article number #2321.

VERY CASUAL FRIDAYS

Trois Rivières, Que. — Additional holidays, flexible work schedules and a four-day working week for some 100,000 parents. These are some of the first promises rolled out by the Parti Québécois as a provincial election approaches. Premier Bernard Landry estimated the four-day working week would cost employers \$100 million because, although they won't have to pay for the extra day off, they would still have to make the same pension contribution for fewer days worked.

FORESTRY SECTOR TWICE AS DANGEROUS

Vancouver — British Columbia forestry workers are hurt on the job twice as much as workers in other industries, according to the B.C. Workers Compensation Board. In the forestry sector between 1997 and 2001, an average of 9.6 of every 100 workers were injured each year compared to 4.2 per 100 in all other sectors. The fatality rate in the sector was also one of the highest.

According to a survey of by the Centre for E-Service at the University of Maryland, employees spend an average of 3.7 hours a week on personal Web use at work. But they log on at home for 5.9 hours to do work such as research and on-line training.

VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

Ottawa — In a survey of minimum wage in 17 countries, Canada ranks 14 with minimum wage that amounts to 34 per cent of average earnings. According to a new study on minimum wage by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Canada's median minimum wage of \$6.50 puts Canada well behind Denmark, which tops the list with minimum wage that amounts to 57 per cent of average full-time income. The United States narrowly beats Canada with 37 per cent. Across the country, net income from minimum wage falls below the poverty line for the largest city in every province.

NEW FRAMEWORK FOR DC PENSIONS

Toronto — It's likely a new regulatory framework for capital accumulation pension plans (CAPs) will be in place by the end of the year. The regulatory principles are intended to both ensure CAP members make sound investment decisions and clarify the responsibilities for employers, administrators, members and service providers. The principles are available online at www.capsa-acor.org. Guidelines for implementation are being worked out by a special committee of market regulators and will likely be released for discussion in April, said Nurez Jawani, co-chair of the special committee.

TOURISM JOBS HARD HIT

Geneva — Tourism jobs hit