

Dealing with regulations

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As one of the most heavily regulated people on earth, Canadians need all the help they can get to deal with the laws and regulations they encounter daily.

But at the federal Office of Privatization and Regulatory Affairs, Tony Campbell has a mission - to make life a little easier for the millions who must live a government-regulated life.

"No other country in the world has four layers of government. We are a heavily regulated country," said Campbell, assistant deputy minister of regulatory affairs.

Campbell's office has just published its third annual federal regulatory plan, a 450-page directory of issues and subjects the government intends to tackle this year. More than 940 topics in areas such as financial administration, consumer protection and food production and marketing are covered in the document. A total of 35 government departments and agencies are on the agenda.

By presenting the government's regulatory plan in advance, Campbell hopes the public will be drawn into the process of preparing and completing the rules that are applied to regulated affairs and activities.

Campbell has just two years of experience in pushing the regulatory plan in public. And he admits that the dry, technical document is "a hard story to communicate."

Not many know that the government even has a regulatory agenda, but his office has approached

thousands in an effort to expand distribution of the document.

"We're quite impressed with the reaction of people who do get into it," he said. "Some organizations have planned their year's activities around the plan."

While the size, substance and layout of the document may tend to discourage business or community leaders from even picking it up, Campbell said his publication is not as dull as it may appear.

"I have to read it just before Christmas every year. That's the height of self-discipline," he chuckled.

"But I tell other public servants that there's no other document that gives you a better education on government. It comes across fast and clean."

NO CHARGE

The plan costs about \$15 per copy to produce, but the Office of Privatization and Regulatory Affairs distributes it free across the country. Campbell compared it to

federal budget documents, which must also be made available to those involved or affected. Every public library in the country is provided with a copy of the plan.

Because the plan is still not widely known, Campbell's office solicits orders and inquiries. Letters have gone out to 1,700 individuals, businesses and organizations informing them that the plan has been published and the office has another 3,000 names on a mailing list assembled over the past two years. About 7,000 copies of the plan were distributed last year.

Publication of the plan is having an effect that the Office of Privatization and Regulatory Affairs considers desirable. The office tracks the government's attempts to reduce the red tape that binds Canadians and has reported a 40 per cent drop in approved regulations over the last two years.

Campbell said the number of proposals presented in the annual

plan has been declining steadily since publication of the first edition. It contained more than 1,000 regulations.

Public response can also delay the introduction of new regulations. Campbell said only about half the entries in the new plan will likely proceed to the final approval stages. Some will be withdrawn once public attitudes have been sampled. Others will be altered.

Even the document itself has been improved this year in response to public comment, Campbell said. A 24-page index has been added to make it easier for readers to find their way through the regulatory maze.

There are also 49 regulations affecting operations in harbors, the regulation to officially withdraw the \$1 bill from circulation, and a review of standards for the collection and storage of human sperm and body organs.

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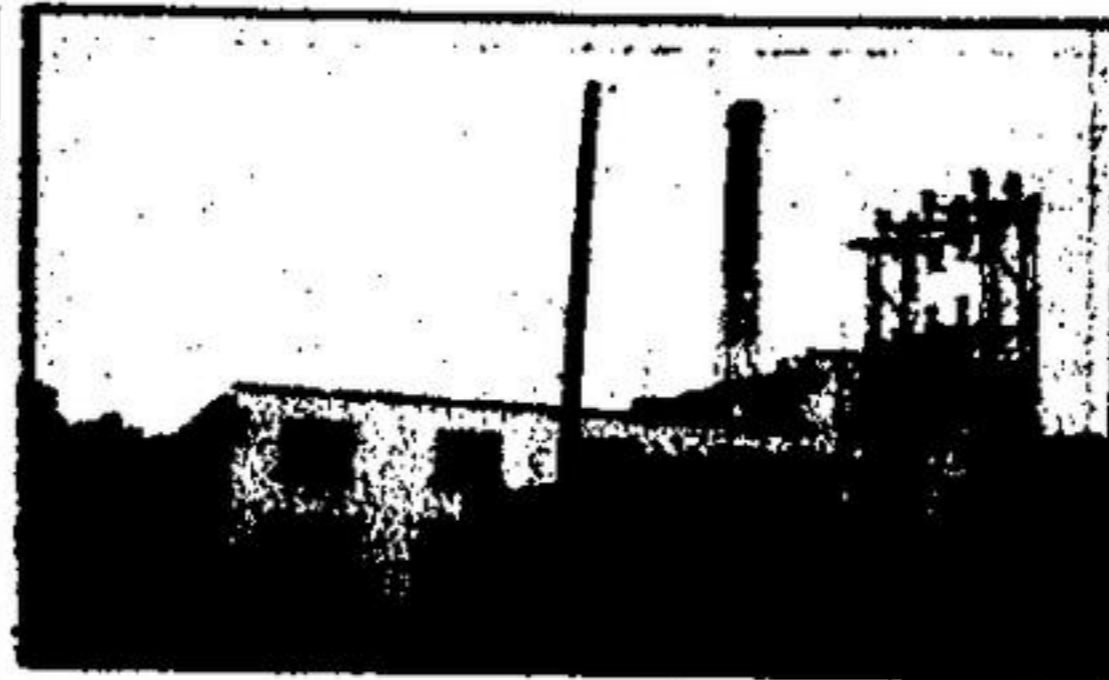
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