

Canadian Loonie is popular in the United States

By KEVIN BELL
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Thomson News Service

Canadians may not be in love with the loonie, but some Americans think a similar \$1 coin is exactly what the United States needs.

James Benfield loves the Canadian loonie so much that he has bought 4,000 of them. He passes them out to trade organizations, congressmen and anybody else with influence as part of his crusade to bring in an American \$1 coin and phase out the paper buck.

"You've done a beautiful job of it," he says of Canada's efforts to replace the \$1 bill.

Benfield is the executive director of the Washington-based Coin Coalition, which represents vending machine companies, amusement game manufacturers, transit firms, copper mining companies, the visually handicapped and just about every other group that has an interest in the U.S. adopting a \$1 coin.

Distributing the 4,000 loonies has been much more effective than boring lawmakers with pamphlets or position papers explaining why a similar American coin would make sense. Benfield said in an interview.

"I just hand over a loon dollar." They can see how it stands out against quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies, he said.

The Coin Coalition realizes it will face a backlash from Americans if a coin replaces the dollar bill, but it's likely they will accept it grudgingly, Benfield said. A majority of Canadians have told pollsters they don't like Canada's \$1 coin, dubbed the loonie because the engraving of a loon adorns one side.

"We know it's a pain in the derriere, but the consumer will adjust in a year or so," Benfield said.

Legislation introduced in Congress in February calls for a gold-colored \$1 coin made of 90-per-cent copper. The Senate is scheduled to hold hearings into the matter next month.

Benfield said the coin may be a reality in the United States within five years, but the U.S. must follow Canada's example if it wants to successfully introduce it. The mint must phase out the paper dollar to allow the coin to gain a foothold, as Canada is doing, he said.

"Public inertia is the single biggest problem we have."

The public has to be made aware that printing \$1 bills costs millions of dollars more than manufacturing the sturdier coins "It's out of sight, so it's out of mind," he said.

The loonie, which Benfield calls "real slick," must also act as the model for the U.S. counterpart. It is a different color than other coins and it is larger, he said.

The U.S. Mint introduced a \$1 coin 10 years ago, named after women's rights crusader Susan B. Anthony, but it failed to catch on because it was only slightly larger than a quarter and also had a serrated edge. It felt the same as a quarter. The next American-dollar coin should have a smooth edge, similar to the loonie, Benfield said.

\$2 BILL, TOO

And to help the transition, the Coin Coalition also wants the U.S. to emulate Canada again and introduce a \$2 bill.

While Canada is well ahead of the United States in phasing out the

\$1 bills, Benfield says it is well behind in another coin concern: getting rid of all those pennies that accumulate in jam jars.

The Price Rounding Bill is the answer. Introduced in Congress last month, it would require charges for most goods and services to be rounded to the nearest nickel.

Benfield isn't holding his breath for quick passage, but he expects the penny will eventually be a coin of the past.

The key to phasing it out is to keep prices the same, then round out the total to the nearest nickel, he said. For example, a single item that costs 98 cents would be rounded to \$1, but buying two would cost \$1.96 and that figure would be rounded to \$1.95.

Since shoppers rarely buy a single item, the rounding process would favor neither the buyer nor the seller, Benfield said.

Consumers would still be able to pay to the cent by cheque or credit card and pennies would still be accepted as legal tender, but they would not be receiving pennies in their change.

Legion holds New Year's party



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Members have still time to get their tickets for the New Year's eve parties, being held in the auditorium, and lounge on Sunday night.

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCRE: High lady - Vi Hewitt, second, Mae Tost. High gent - Bert Porter, second - Flo Carswell.

CAR CLUB WINNERS: Dec. 21, 374 Russ Fendley, 115 Carol and Ralph Bosma, 497 Gloria Sargent, 22 Josie Tost, 02 Ron Dorenbach,

173 Max Jack.

Yours truly managed to miss one of the \$150 winners last week. Betty Caldwell was the lady in question, sorry about that.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON MEAT DRAW: This week's winners - Jack Pickett, Harry Allen, Keith Tost, Peg Lewis, Gord King, Ron Stott, Mike Sargent, Dorothy Vinkle, Don Latchford, Frank Nicholson, Herman Nicholson.

The turkey was won by Lottie Bottoms, who drew Ab Ford's name out of the drum for the extra turkey, which was donated to the branch by a guest.

MEMBERSHIP: Don't forget to pay your dues before the year end. Early bird draw results will be announced when I get them.

The President's Levee will be held New Year's Day 2-4 p.m.

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