

Aluminium International Today Issue September/October 2020



What does a ‘webinar a day’ keep away?

I am writing this comment (still from the comfort of my own home office) as small groups of children skip by on their first day back to school, after what must have felt like the longest summer holidays ever.

This ‘back to school’ feeling in September never seems to go away, even in adulthood and as the world starts to get back to whatever this ‘new normal’ is, we are very aware that things have changed and we are entering a period of recovery. While we should have been gearing up for the ALUMINIUM Show next month, instead, we are working to bring you a virtual experience between the 5th - 9th October.

We know, virtual experiences are still a strange idea, but we are also aware of the need to provide information and content to our industry in these special times and welcome the opportunity to do so together with Reed Exhibitions Germany during the period of the original exhibition.

We are inviting the whole industry to join us every day during this ‘ALUMINIUM Week’ for a dedicated webinar and hear from industry experts about green technologies, automation, robotics and a look at building a sustainable recovery plan across Europe.

Registration is free and you can pick and choose which of the webinars to attend, or sign up to watch the recorded version at your leisure!

On a separate note, there are different layers to journalism. One approach is to report the news. AIT does this on a daily basis through updates on our website. Another approach is through detailed research and analysis – independent of day-to-day activities. AIT does this as well, typically through features in our print publication.

There are occasions where events can change aspects of those feature news columns. Such is the case with this month’s edition of The Alumina Chronicles.

Initially, this month’s edition was to focus on an overview of the aluminium industry in Canada. The research and analysis had been completed, photos and quotes had been secured, and the initial text was written.

Then, the Federal government of the United States decided to re-impose the Section 232 tariff on certain aluminium products imported into the USA from Canada. On short notice, this edition of The Alumina Chronicles was completely re-written to focus on the re-imposition of the tariff. Additional research and analysis were done. New interviews were completed. New quotes and photos were secured. The result is this month’s edition of The Alumina Chronicles.

Due to our printing schedule, our magazine had to be at the printers in early September. On September 15th, the day before retaliatory tariffs from Canada were to take effect, the Federal government of the US decided to cancel the Section 232 tariff and potentially – in the future – implement quotas.

Thus, you’ll read a news column this month that is out-of-date in a major respect – this tariff only lasted a few weeks and has now been cancelled.

We would still recommend you read this news column because it highlights some of the reasons why the US Federal government may have decided that the re-imposition of this tariff may have been poor policy.

You'll read how the USA and Canada share a joint military command that protects North America. You'll read how almost all business leaders in the aluminium industry and all labor leaders in the aluminium industry were against the re-imposition of the Section 232 aluminium tariff on certain Canadian imports into the USA. You'll even read the public testimony – from a few years ago – of leaders of the two aluminium firms advocating for the re-imposition of the tariff. In 2017, one of those leaders explicitly stated that "...Section 232 relief can be effective without applying it to Canada."

You'll find out, if you didn't already know, that the USA considers a number of business facilities in Canada (and Australia and the United Kingdom) to be the same as if those facilities were on actual American soil.

In addition, you'll read how the US Federal government has granted exclusions – the ability to import aluminium into the US without paying the tariff – to about 80% of the requests decided thus far for such exclusions. Interestingly, the approvals include few requests from firms wanting to import aluminium from Russia, but substantial numbers of approvals for businesses importing aluminium from China.

Probably most enlightening are the quotes of both of the current leaders of the USA and Canada regarding their nations' shared values.

In short, please read this edition of The Alumina Chronicles. You may get a better understanding of why the US Federal government decided that adding a tariff to certain aluminium products imported from Canada was not the best option...! I hope you enjoy the issue.

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