

Canada relaunches COOL complaint with WTO

By **Janie Gabbett** for Meetingplace.com on 4/28/2009

Canada has reissued its complaint to the World Trade Organization about the U.S. mandatory country-of-origin labeling law, Canadian Trade Minister Stockwell Day told reporters on Monday.

“I’ve informed Ambassador [Ronald] Kirk that we will move forward with the [WTO] consultation,” Reuters quoted Day as saying after an official meeting between the two government trade officials.

Canada asserts the country-of-origin rules that went into effect in mid-March are hurting Canada’s hog and cattle industries. Day made specific reference to a letter U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack sent meat processors in February asking them to go beyond the law in their labeling practices.

“They’ve left a whole lot of questions under something called ‘voluntary compliance,’” Day said on CTV’s Canada AM show on Tuesday. “The rules are so unclear that production facilities in the United States are actually starting to turn back Canadian products, saying it’s just too confusing to try and meet these labeling provisions.”

A statement issued by the office of the U.S. Trade Representative after the meeting said Day had “expressed Canada’s views on issues including country-of-origin labeling,” among others.

“We agreed to maintain a high-level engagement to resolve these issues,” the statement quoted Day as saying.