

For Immediate Release*Canada and ASEAN Commence Free Trade Agreement Exploratory Discussions*

[Canada/Singapore, 15 Sept 2017] The Canada-ASEAN Business Council (CABC) notes the decision to begin formal exploratory discussions on a Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA), following the [ASEAN Economic Ministers \(AEM\) - Canada consultations on September 8th in Manila, Philippines](#).

The AEM-Canada Consultations were co-chaired by Canada's Parliamentary Secretary to International Trade, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (on behalf of Minister of Trade François-Philippe Champagne), and Philippines Secretary of Trade Ramon M. Lopez. The meetings were preceded by CABC's annual advocacy update to the AEM on behalf of the Canadian private sector.

The Ministers further agreed to a formal feasibility study on a Canada-ASEAN FTA, to be conducted in parallel to the launch of the exploratory discussions. The statement comes one year after Canada and ASEAN agreed to the drafting of terms of reference for a free-trade agreement between Canada and ASEAN.

Following the announcement, ASEAN now joins China as one of Canada's major potential FTA partners currently in the exploratory discussion phase.

"The decision indicates that Canada and ASEAN recognize the immense potential that awaits deeper economic integration between our regions, and that the political will exists to get the job done", mentioned CABC's President Wayne Farmer. "Our Members represent Canada's most committed companies to the ASEAN region, and this announcement is an important step closer to providing the best possible trading environment for their businesses".

This announcement precedes the November 2017 visit from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Da Nang, Vietnam (a major ASEAN economy) for the APEC Leaders Week (Nov. 6-11), as well as a potential visit to the 12th ASEAN Leaders Meetings in Manila, Philippines, Nov. 10-14. Senior Canadian officials are also expected at the 2018 Canada-ASEAN Business Forum, to be held on March 21-22, 2018 in Singapore.

In May 2017, the CABC jointly launched a report examining the economic impact of a Canada-ASEAN FTA, [The ASEAN Advantage](#). The report indicates that a trade deal with ASEAN, benchmarked on the terms of the successful Australia - New Zealand - ASEAN agreement (AANZFTA) reached in 2012, could add an additional C\$11 billion in additional annual bi-lateral trade between the two regions by 2027.

Key Facts:

- 2017 marks the 40th anniversary of Canada-ASEAN diplomatic relations.
- The ten ASEAN member-states include: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- ASEAN has a population of over 625 million, with combined GDP of over US \$2.5 trillion.
- Canada has strong people-to-people ties with ASEAN - for example, there are over 660,000 ethnic Filipinos living in Canada

- ASEAN is young (median age of 28.8 in 2015), with three of the world's ten fastest growing economies: Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.
- Canada has diplomatic representation in all ten ASEAN nations, including a dedicated Canadian Ambassador to ASEAN, based in Jakarta.

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