

## Canada and Costa Rica Launch Talks to Expand Free Trade Agreement

*International Trade Minister Ed Fast says an expanded free trade agreement will broaden access to services, investment and other areas that will benefit Canadian workers*

**(No. 337 - November 8, 2011 - 5:45 p.m. ET)** The Honourable Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, today announced the start of the first round of negotiations to modernize the Canada-Costa Rica Free Trade Agreement taking place in Ottawa this week. This negotiating round will wrap up on November 10, 2011.

"I travelled to Costa Rica with Prime Minister Stephen Harper in August, where he announced Canada's commitment to further strengthening our economic ties with Costa Rica," said Minister Fast. "We are acting on this commitment today by launching negotiations that will create jobs for workers and generate prosperity for families both in Canada and in Costa Rica—a key objective of Canada's engagement in the Americas."

The Canada-Costa Rica Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force in 2002, focuses mainly on trade in goods. An expanded free trade agreement will deepen market access in services and government procurement. It will also cover e-commerce, telecommunications, investment and technical barriers to trade.

"With one in five jobs and more than 60 percent of Canada's economy generated by trade, our government's focus is on creating jobs and opportunity for hard-working Canadian families," added Minister Fast. "An improved free trade agreement with Costa Rica will create new opportunities for Canadian businesses in many sectors, including agriculture, construction, financial services, government procurement, manufacturing and telecommunications."

Costa Rica is Canada's largest trading partner in Central America, accounting for 31 percent of Canada's two-way merchandise trade with the region in 2010.

Canada has concluded trade agreements with eight countries in the Americas and is actively pursuing additional trade relationships in the region. Last June, during his first official working visit as Canada's trade minister, Minister Fast announced the formal launch of exploratory talks between Canada and South America's largest common market, Mercosur, whose members are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Mercosur countries represent a market of nearly 250 million consumers and account for almost three quarters of all economic activity in South America.

For more information, please visit: [Canada-Costa Rica Free Trade Agreement](#).

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