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## Canada - European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

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### June Briefing note on Canada-EFTA FTA (1999)

#### Status of Negotiations

Since the negotiation of a free trade agreement between Canada and the EFTA countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) was announced on October 9, 1998, four negotiating sessions have taken place: in Ottawa on October 14-15, and in Geneva on November 23 and 24, 1998 and February 15-19, 1999 and in Ottawa on April 12-16, 1999. A fifth session is planned for June 14-18, 1999 in Oslo.

Discussions continue to focus on general market access issues, including tariff and non-tariff barriers, rules of origin and trade facilitation and customs procedures; agriculture; services, investment; competition, state monopolies, subsidies and anti-dumping; government procurement and legal issues. Working groups are established to work on issues in each of these areas.

All sessions have been positive and helpful in moving the negotiation agenda forward. Differences of view have been identified and negotiators are working hard to find solutions for the more difficult issues.

Negotiations on rules of origin have progressed since January with monthly week-long meetings. Negotiators have made good progress in designing the general rules for determining whether goods would receive preferences as well as the detailed product specific rules on a line-by-line basis. Canadian proposals for the agreement to include a section on trade facilitation are being discussed in detail.

Both sides have agreed that work will continue over the summer and are optimistic that negotiations will conclude in the fall of 1999. Officials from DFAIT, Industry Canada, Finance, Revenue Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Transport Canada, Citizenship and Immigration and Fisheries and Oceans are involved in the negotiating process. The government continues to consult with interested industry stakeholders, special interest groups, non-government organizations, the Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade (SAGITs) and with Provinces. We welcome your continued interest in this important agreement.

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