

February 20, 2008 (11:15 a.m. EST)

No. 39

CANADA LAUNCHES FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN

The Honourable David Emerson, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, today announced the launch of negotiations toward a free trade agreement (FTA) between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Officials from both countries plan to meet for a first round of negotiations in April 2008.

“A free trade agreement with Jordan would be Canada’s first with an Arab country, and would serve as a gateway to Middle Eastern and North African markets,” said Minister Emerson. “Jordan is also a key partner for Canada in the pursuit of regional peace, security and stability, and we welcome this opportunity to strengthen our ties with this regional leader.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper committed to a free trade agreement when he and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan met last July. The exploratory discussions were held in November 2007, and both Canada and Jordan determined that there are potential benefits to deepening trade relations.

Jordan’s rapidly expanding economy provides opportunities for Canadian exporters in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and agri-food, and forest products. An FTA with Jordan would improve our trade and economic ties, and better position Canadian businesses in relation to their international competitors, including those of the United States and the European Union, which already have FTAs with Jordan. The FTA negotiations build on the new bilateral Air Services Agreement and a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which were announced last July.

Total bilateral trade between Canada and Jordan in 2007 amounted to \$76 million. Canadian merchandise exports were \$60 million, while imports from Jordan were \$16 million. Top exports to Jordan included forest products, agriculture and agri-food products, and machinery and equipment. Imports from Jordan were comprised mainly of apparel and agricultural products.

In keeping with Canada’s approach to free trade agreements, Canada will also seek to address labour- and environment-specific dimensions of economic integration through the negotiation of parallel agreements in these areas.

The Government of Canada conducted a comprehensive consultation process with Canadians, who indicated support for a Canada-Jordan FTA. The government will continue to engage stakeholders to ensure that their interests and concerns are taken into account during the negotiations.

A Free Trade Agreement with Jordan would be subject to a new process announced by the Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, which requires international treaties signed by Canada to be tabled in the House of Commons.

Canada’s global trade agenda

Under Canada’s [Global Commerce Strategy](#), the government is working to advance Canada’s trade interests by opening up new opportunities for Canadian exporters, investors and innovators. The strategy includes an aggressive trade negotiation agenda, aimed at securing competitive terms of access in markets that offer significant potential for Canadian products and expertise.

Canada is currently negotiating free trade agreements with several countries and groups of countries. Access to foreign markets is also being pursued through investment promotion and science and technology agreements.

Canada has FTAs with the United States and Mexico (NAFTA), and with Chile, Israel and Costa Rica. In January 2008, Canada concluded FTA negotiations with Peru and signed an agreement with the European

Free Trade Association countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

For more information on the Canada-Jordan FTA negotiations, please visit:

www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/jordan-jordanie.aspx?lang=en

For more information on Canada's Global Commerce Strategy, please visit:

www.international.gc.ca/commerce/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=en

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Lynn Meahan
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler
Olympics
613-992-7332

Trade Media Relations Office
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
613-996-2000
www.international.gc.ca/index.aspx