

## Harper Government Announces Latest Milestone in Pro-trade Plan to Open New Markets for Canadian Exports

*To help create jobs and prosperity for hard-working Canadians, Minister Fast announces trade mission to Middle East will follow October 1 coming-into-force of Canada-Jordan trade agreement*

**September 21, 2012** - The Honourable Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, today announced that the Canada-Jordan Free Trade Agreement will come into force on October 1, 2012, the latest example of the Harper government opening new markets and creating new competitive advantages around the world for Canadian exporters. Minister Fast made the announcement alongside Nasser Judeh, Jordan's Foreign Minister, who is visiting Canada.

"Our government's top priority remains the economy, and protecting and strengthening the prosperity of hard-working families in every region of Canada," said Minister Fast. "As of October 1, Canadian businesses will have preferred access to the Jordanian market. This competitive advantage will help increase Canadian exports and help create jobs and economic growth for Canadian workers and businesses in a variety of sectors."

On October 1, producers and exporters across Canada will benefit from reduced or eliminated tariffs on nearly all of the country's current exports to Jordan. The elimination of tariffs on forest products, machinery and agricultural products will greatly benefit Quebec and the Western and Atlantic provinces. Ontario stands to benefit with regard to key exports, such as machinery, vehicles, tires and furniture.

The agreement will also provide a more predictable, transparent and rules-based trading environment for Canadian investors and businesses.

The Canada-Arab Business Council (CABC) applauded the news.

"CABC members welcome the Canada-Jordan Free Trade Agreement and the duty-free access to the Jordanian market that comes with it," said J. Hugh O'Donnell, Chairman of the CABC. "This agreement will expand opportunities for Canadian businesses and their employees by providing another foothold in the broader Middle East-North Africa market."

Minister Fast also announced that he will be leading a trade mission to Saudi Arabia and Jordan from October 5 to 9.

"Our government is committed to ensuring that Canadian businesses are aware of the competitive advantages being created through the most ambitious trade expansion plan in Canadian history," said Minister Fast. "I am pleased to be leading a trade mission to Jordan, where preferred access for our businesses will soon be in effect, and to other exciting markets in the Middle East that need Canadian expertise, goods and know-how."

The Canada-Jordan trade agreement is Canada's first with an Arab country and only the second in the Middle East, after the agreement with Israel. The agreement demonstrates the importance Canada places on further developing relations with Jordan, a country that plays an important role in the Middle East, especially by promoting peace and security in the region. In 2011, Canada had a trade surplus with Jordan. Two-way trade totalled almost \$89 million, with Canadian merchandise exports to Jordan reaching \$70.1 million, more than double the \$31 million in 2003.

Parallel agreements with Jordan on the environment and labour cooperation will come into force at the same time as the free trade agreement.