

PM announces exploratory talks towards a Canada-Thailand free trade agreement

Increased trade will create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity

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Bangkok, Thailand



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, today announced that their two countries will pursue exploratory discussions towards a free trade agreement. The announcement was made during Prime Minister Harper's official visit to Thailand.

"Our Government is working hard to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada by expanding free and open trade with the world," said Prime Minister Harper. "A free trade agreement with Thailand – one of the fastest growing economies in the world – stands to significantly benefit farmers and businesses across Canada."

The exploratory talks will examine the potential economic benefits of a free trade agreement and how such an agreement would enhance the existing relationship between the two countries. The Government will also be engaging with Canadians and stakeholders, including provincial and territorial partners, on the scope of a possible free trade agreement with Thailand.

Thailand is Canada's largest bilateral merchandise trading partner within the 10-

member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In 2011, the year that marked 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Canada's bilateral merchandise trade with Thailand totalled nearly \$3.5 billion, an increase of 14.8 percent over 2010.

In less than six years, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with nine countries: Colombia, Honduras, Jordan, Panama, Peru and the European Free Trade Association states of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. It is also in negotiation with many others, including India and the European Union.