

# Conservatives go on marketing blitz to sell EU free trade deal

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OTTAWA — Cabinet ministers, senators and Conservative MPs fanned out across the country Friday, selling the merits of a Canada-EU free-trade pact in 18 different events, arguing myths have overtaken the realities of the deal.

Events in all provinces will focus on local economic issues affected by the deal including shipping in Nova Scotia, fishing in New Brunswick, manufacturing in Newfoundland and Labrador, financial services in Ontario, agricultural in the Prairies, and the energy sector in Alberta.

The government also announced Friday the launch of a website that provides some facts about the agreement.

Critics and opposition parties have said the government hasn't provided enough details about the pact to Parliament or the public to determine whether it is in Canada's best interest.

"Unfortunately, anti-trade activists continue to spread falsehoods about trade," said International Trade Minister Ed Fast. "These are the same falsehoods spread about the NAFTA negotiations a generation ago by the same groups.

"They were proven wrong then, and they are just as wrong now. We must fight their fear-mongering with facts, and their falsehoods with reality."

Critics of the deal on both sides of the Atlantic argue parts of the agreement could have effects on domestic jobs, make the privatization of public services a likelihood and increase the prices of consumer goods and pharmaceutical drugs.

Dozens of Canadian cities have asked the government for exemptions from the agreement, worried the pact will limit their ability

to award contracts to local organizations.

The marketing blitz comes days after an EU representative said the deal was three-quarters complete and expected to be finalized by the end of the year.

The free trade deal with the EU is the largest the Conservatives have attempted to sign since coming to office, and, if finalized, would be the largest free trade deal signed since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

"Where others think Canada should turn inward and cower in fear of the global economy, our government rejects this view because we know that the best way to create jobs and prosperity is to embrace the global economy," Fast said.

"The foundation of the most ambitious free trade plan in Canada's history will be solidified with an ambitious agreement with the EU."

Free-trade talks between Canada and the EU have been going on since May 2009.

Rules of origin — which determine what goods can be subject to tariffs — and supply management of agricultural goods continue to be points of contention between the two parties.

The Conservatives have said free trade with the EU could add \$12 billion annually to Canada's economy and boost trade by \$38 billion.

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