

Canada-EU Trade Talks: Harper Urged To Send Ministers Before Talks Fail

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OTTAWA - The head of Canada's leading business group is urging the prime minister to send a high-level team of ministers to Europe to reboot the stalled free-trade talks before it's too late.

Canadian Council of Chief Executives head John Manley, a top-shelf minister in the Jean Chretien government, says negotiators have gone as far as they can and the situation now rests at the political level.

He says there's a real possibility the talks will fail unless Stephen Harper and his top ministers take the initiative.

Manley is urging the prime minister to send Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and Trade Minister Ed Fast on a mission to Europe early in the fall to show Canada's resolve.

He says the government risks a repeat of the South Korean experience, whereby Canada was first off the mark in getting free-trade talks started, only to watch the U.S. take the baton and actually get the deal done.

Manley says Europe is too big and rich a market to let get away.

As well, Manley says the government's overall trade agenda could derail if the European talks fail, noting that Canada's other trade

fronts — the TransPacific Partnership, Japan and India — could prove even more difficult.