

17:33 21May2007 RTRS-Canada urges EU to move on business red tape

BRUSSELS, May 21 (Reuters) - Canada is pushing the European Union to do a deal on cutting red tape when leaders meet in June, after the United States and the EU recently pledged to smooth transatlantic business.

Canada has long sought to reduce its economic reliance on the United States but has watched with concern as the EU launched free trade talks with countries in Asia while negotiations with Ottawa remain on hold.

Canadian Trade Minister David Emerson has now urged EU trade chief Peter Mandelson to finalise a regulatory deal at an EU-Canada summit on June 4 and to take other steps to make it easier for Canadian and European companies to do business.

"Clearly, Canada and the EU should grasp the opportunity presented by the upcoming summit to achieve concrete results," Emerson said in a letter to Mandelson dated May 10.

The two sides should also launch a feasibility study that could pave the way for a broad, new trade and investment agreement, Emerson's letter said, noting a similar move at an EU-U.S. summit in April.

But an EU official said the 27-nation bloc wanted to resume its suspended talks with Canada, on issues including priorities for the EU such as public procurement, only once haggling over a global trade deal at the World Trade Organisation is over.

Those talks were suspended last year pending the outcome of the WTO round, which looks set to succeed or fail this year.

"We are a bit worried that Europe does not look at Canada with all the attention that it deserves," said Christos Sirros, the top representative in Brussels of the Quebec provincial government, which has proposed a full EU-Canada free trade deal.

He said progress already achieved in EU-Canada trade and investment talks meant they should be in a position to move more quickly to a deal than the EU and the United States.

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