
News Release

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Canada and France Sign Joint Action Plan to Enhance Commercial Relations

The Honourable David Emerson, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, today signed a Canada-France Joint Action Plan with his French counterpart, Christine Lagarde, Minister of Economy, Industry and Employment. The signing took place in Paris, where Minister Emerson is attending an international meeting.

“The Canadian and European business communities have demonstrated strong support for further liberalizing bilateral trade and investment,” said Minister Emerson. “This Action Plan is a step in that direction as we look to deepen and broaden our commercial relations with France.”

The Canada-France Joint Action Plan is a unique collaborative approach to enhance economic relations and pursue an ongoing commercial dialogue between the two countries. The Plan addresses three key objectives:

- to strengthen cooperation in areas related to competitiveness, innovation, and science and technology;
- to support a closer economic partnership between Canada and the European Union; and
- to assist in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Canada and EU markets.

France, with one of the world’s largest economies, is Canada’s ninth-largest trading partner and its fourth-largest in Europe after the United Kingdom, Germany and Norway. France is Canada’s fourth-largest investor, with a stock worth \$17.4 billion (2007), and in 2006 nearly 400 French companies had head offices in Canada. In addition, France is seventh as a destination country for Canadian investment, with a stock in that country of \$14.6 billion (2007). At the end of 2007, bilateral merchandise trade between France and Canada reached a record level of \$8.2 billion.



This is an important year in Canada-France relations and more broadly in Canada-Europe relations. France will assume the European Union Council Presidency on July 1, 2008, and in that capacity will take a leading role in the upcoming Canada-EU Summit to be held in Montreal this October. The 2008 Summit will offer an important opportunity for Canada and the EU to deliver on commitments made at the very productive June 2007 Summit in Berlin, including on cooperating in Afghanistan, strengthening the Canada-EU economic partnership and engaging more closely on climate change and energy matters.

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A ministerial statement on the Canada-France Joint Action Plan follows.

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Lynn Meahan
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics
613-992-7332

Trade Media Relations Office
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
613-996-2000
www.international.gc.ca/index.aspx

Ministerial Statement

Canada-France Joint Action Plan 2008-2009

We acknowledge the statement of conclusions of the 15th session of the Canada-France Economic Meeting, held in Paris on January 24, 2008. Given the positive outcomes of the implementation of the 2006-2007 Canada-France Joint Action Plan, signed in January 2006 by Mr. David Emerson, Minister of International Trade of Canada, and Ms. Christine Lagarde, Minister Delegate for External Trade of the French Republic, it was decided to develop a new Joint Action Plan for the next two years based on two major elements:

1. Ensure an operational contribution of the two countries' economies in the global business value chain;
2. Encourage cooperation in innovation in order to overcome challenges relating to competitiveness and economic growth, particularly in strategic sectors defined by mutual consent between the participants of the 15th Canada – France Economic Meeting.

The 2008-2009 Canada-France Joint Action Plan will pursue three key objectives:

I. Strengthen cooperation among actors, in Canada and France, in areas relating to competitiveness, innovation and science and technology (S&T).

Special attention will be given to several strategic sectors as specified by mutual consent, for example, the environment, energy, aeronautics, information and communications technologies (ICT) and life sciences.

Poles of competitiveness and clusters are at the core of enterprises' innovation and value-added process. Scientific cooperation, in particular that based on exchanges between French poles of competitiveness and Canadian clusters, will therefore be encouraged.

II. Support the objective of a closer economic partnership between Canada and the European Union.

Participants decided to support the implementation of this objective, based in particular on the results of the joint study on costs and benefits of a closer economic partnership between Canada and the European Union, conducted by Canadian authorities and the European Commission. The purpose of this study is to assess the potential benefits that would result from the elimination of barriers hindering the flow of goods, services and capital between the European Union and Canada, as well as to determine how this strengthened economic partnership could complete efforts now underway to deepen cooperation in areas such as science and technology, energy and the environment. The results

of this study will be reviewed at the Canada-European Union Summit which will be held in Canada in October 2008, when France assumes the Presidency of the European Union.

III. Make institutional cooperation available to companies and, in particular, guide the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the marketplace.

Recognizing the importance of the contribution that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make toward developing the economic relationship, the participants call upon their regional and international foreign trade support networks to strengthen institutional collaboration to the benefit of companies.

The participants decided to pursue and strengthen the experience of putting their respective foreign trade support networks to work in guiding enterprises in their efforts to expand internationally. To do so, joint actions will be identified in priority sectors and for priority operations (technology meetings, participation in trade shows, regional missions). These actions will serve to share available information.

In order to meet the objectives set out herein, the participants have decided to maintain an ongoing dialogue and exchange of information to identify and implement collaborative and partnering initiatives.

The participants will further work toward strengthening Canada-France cooperation in promoting trade, investment and innovation across their respective territory, in Canada and in France. In this context, the participants will collaborate closely on exploring partnerships across the sectors defined as priorities, by mutual consent. They will also strive to contribute to resolving trade irritants that persist between Canada and France.

Follow-up

It was decided to provide a mid-term review on the implementation of the Joint Action Plan 2008-2009 in January 2009.

It was decided that the 16th Canada-France Economic Meeting will be held in Canada at the end of 2009, at which time the first item on the agenda will be to proceed with an assessment of the results achieved through application of the Joint Action Plan 2008-2009.