

# Canadian Trade Negotiators in Brussels as EU-US Trade Talks Loom

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Canadian trade negotiators are meeting their European Union counterparts in Brussels this week to begin the final push for a free-trade deal before the Europeans turn their attention to a bigger prize—the U.S.

The negotiators are trying to close the gap on three key outstanding issues before talks escalate to the political level, according to people familiar with the matter.

Canada and the EU have been negotiating a trade deal for almost four years and officials have been tight-lipped about a new timeline after [missing the deadline](#) to conclude talks by the end of last year.

Sources say the major issues that remain to be resolved include Canada's demand for greater access to the beef and pork markets in Europe; the EU's demand for access to public procurement in Canada, particularly on mass transit and infrastructure; and the scope of an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism.

Negotiators are meeting Monday to Wednesday, and will likely focus on the non-agricultural issues, leaving beef and pork access—the thorniest matter—to another day due to a holiday in Europe at the end of the week, one source told Canada Real Time.

In a recent interview, a senior European official [told Canada Real Time](#) that negotiations are “very close to the finishing line” and may be wrapped up in time for the June 17-18 G-8 Summit in Northern Ireland. But Christian Leffler, managing director in charge of the Americas in the European External Action Service—the EU's diplomatic corps—warned that Ottawa risks losing priority in Brussels if the deal isn't completed before the European launch trade talks with the EU, likely in late June or July.

A source told Canada Real Time that a deal is “essentially done,” with only the three outstanding issues remaining to hammer out.

Canadian officials dispute the notion that talks will stall if they cannot forge a deal before the EU turns its attention to the U.S. They contend that a Canada-EU pact will serve as a template for a U.S. deal.

But another person familiar with the matter said the specter of the EU redeploying its negotiating resources to the EU-U.S. talks is “very real” for Ottawa, and a “big factor” in pushing to close a deal.

A spokesman for Canadian Trade Minister Ed Fast wasn’t immediately available to comment.