

# Canadians to see Canada-EU free trade pact legal text soon, says Fast

By: **The Canadian Press**  
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OTTAWA - The legal text of the Canada-European Union free trade agreement will be ready for Canadians to examine soon, possibly in the next month or two, federal Trade Minister Ed Fast said Friday.

The agreement was signed amidst much fanfare in mid-October, but finalizing the text and putting it into legal language has taken time.

Fast said the delay is not unusual given the complexities of the agreement.

Some have speculated that the Oct. 18 announcement left several issues still unresolved, particularly concerning investment protection, but Fast said to expect no surprises once the legal text is made public.

"There are no holdups," he said. "They are very close to being done. We expect that once a draft legal text is available, we'll make it public ... (and) we don't expect it will be any different than the summary of final negotiated items that we released (in the fall)."

He said Canada may see the document before Europe, where it will have to be translated into 24 languages. Still, implementation will require ratification by all 28 EU member states and is not expected until 2015.

Fast made his remarks in a brief interview following a meeting with his Colombian counterpart, Santiago Rojas Arroyo, who was in Ottawa to discuss trade progress between the two countries since the start of a free trade agreement in August 2011.

Although the global numbers may not reflect a major increase in

bilateral trade over the past two-and-a-half years, Rojas said 350 new Colombian companies are now exporting to Canada.

The minister also said Colombia had made strides in improving its human rights record and in negotiating a peace accord with rebel groups.

Human Rights Watch official Max Schoening, who focuses on Colombia, agreed that there had been "some improvement under the current administration," but added that the government could do much more to prevent abuses and prosecute perpetrators, both inside the army and those associated with the rebels or para-military groups.

"For many residents living in areas where armed groups are active, for journalists, human rights defenders, trade unionists, for community leaders, it continues to be a dangerous place," he said.

"More than 150,000 continue to flee their homes each year as a result of the violence."

Fast agreed that Colombia still has a way to go, but said it should also be acknowledged that it is "headed in the right direction."

On the trade front, Rojas said the most important next step is for there to be co-operation between Colombia's and Canada's business communities to advance ties and investments.

To that end, Fast said he is taking a trade delegation to Colombia this summer that will include business leaders.

Colombia, a country of 47 million, is Canada's fifth-largest trading partner in Latin America with bilateral trade totalling \$1.4 billion last year.