

Significant progress made in EU-Canada trade talks

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Talks about a free-trade pact between Europe and Canada will need further work in the coming months, but negotiators made significant progress in talks this week, the EU's trade spokesman said on Friday.

"While a number of issues remain complex and will need further work over the coming months, significant progress was made across the board, including on goods, services and public procurement," EU trade spokesman John Clancy said in a statement.

"In particular, market access offers have been exchanged in goods and public procurement. The negotiations remain fully on track and negotiators remain confident to reach a very ambitious agreement," he added.

Negotiators have been hoping to strike a deal this year, but sources briefed on the issue said the two sides had disagreed in this week's talks on how to open public contracts and services markets to each other's operators.

Appetite among EU and Canadian businesses remains strong for a deal, but some opponents say a trade agreement would boost the exploitation of controversial oil sands deposits in Canada and other critics reject the opening of sensitive sectors such as drinking water, health and defence to market competition on both sides.