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The free trade advantage

The Government of Canada's pro-trade plan has been instrumental in fast-tracking our trade expansion progress globally—and Canadian business women are taking notice. Many business women are increasingly looking to our free trade agreement partners for export and investment opportunities.

It's no wonder. Free trade agreements (FTAs) bring with them valuable benefits. They can eliminate or reduce tariffs on goods and/or services, increase Canadians' capacity to compete with local companies, lighten the bureaucratic burden of doing business and offer investment safeguards. In short, FTAs make it easier and cheaper for Canadian entrepreneurs to conduct business, saving them time and money.

Free trade contributes significantly to Canada's bottom line. After all, we are a trading nation, with international trade accounting for more than 62% of our nation's GDP. Free trade also serves as an engine for growth, prosperity and jobs. One in five Canadian jobs is related to our exports to other nations.

Since 2006, the Government of Canada has concluded free trade agreements with nine countries: Colombia, Honduras, Jordan, Panama, Peru and the European Free Trade Association member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. In addition, Canada is in ongoing trade negotiations with the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea and the members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Canada also has observer status in the Pacific Alliance.

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Message from the Minister

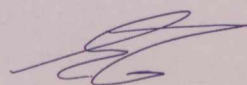
It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2013 edition of the *Business Women in International Trade* newsletter, with its special focus on Canada's free trade agreements.

As Minister of International Trade, I have had the distinct privilege of seeing how Canadian business women are prospering and driving Canada's economy forward. According to Industry Canada, 47% of all small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Canada were entirely or partly owned by women in 2010. With SMEs responsible for \$77 billion—or about 25%—of Canada's total value of exports in that year, women are clearly making an impressive contribution to Canada's prosperity and success in today's global economy.

The year 2013 promises to be even more exciting for Canadian business women as a result of expanded trade opportunities available through Canada's free trade agreements. In less than six years, Canada has concluded trade agreements with nine countries. And as part of our pro-trade plan, the Government of Canada is working to enhance existing trade relations and secure preferred access to some of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Women exporters and investors are well-positioned to take advantage of the new opportunities available through this expanded trade agenda. And whenever Canadian businesses succeed abroad, it translates into jobs and prosperity at home.

I encourage you to read this newsletter, which will guide you through these opportunities and connect you with important resources. These include the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, which can provide you with on-the-ground intelligence and practical advice on how to draw the most from Canada's free trade agreements.

Canadian women in trade are dynamic and are making a strong impact in many sectors of our economy. I wish you continued success as you actively pursue global opportunities and accelerate the international growth of your businesses.



The Honourable Ed Fast
Minister of International Trade



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