

Introduction and Overview

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement is an historic and precedent-setting accord governing the largest bilateral trade in the world. When it comes into force on January 1, 1989, the Agreement will achieve major objectives for both countries. It will eliminate barriers to trade in goods and services between the two countries. It will facilitate fair competition within the free trade area and significantly expand liberalization of conditions for cross-border investment. The Agreement will also establish effective procedures for the joint administration of its provisions and the resolution of disputes. It meets the test of fairness and of mutual advantage to both Canada and the United States and sets the foundation for further bilateral and multilateral co-operation to expand and enhance the benefits of the Agreement.

The Agreement is an important contribution to Canada's future sustained economic growth, development and prosperity. It is consistent with Canada's obligations to its trading partners in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), building upon GATT principles and going beyond them in new areas such as services and trade-related investment measures. The Agreement, together with the Uruguay Round multilateral negotiations under the GATT, shows Canada's commitment to reducing trade barriers around the world. Trade liberalization, a cornerstone in the government's overall economic strategy, offers Canadians a chance to grow and prosper in a competitive and dynamic economy. By adding significantly to economic growth, incomes and employment, the Agreement will allow governments to continue to stimulate economic development in Canada's poorer regions and strengthen social programs for all Canadians.

From the beginning of the bilateral trade negotiations, close consultations were undertaken with a wide variety of sources. Advice was sought from the business community through the International Trade Advisory Committee and the 15 Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade. First Ministers held nine special meetings to discuss the negotiations, as well as discussions at their annual First Ministers' Conference. Provincial trade representatives participated in regular meetings of the federal-provincial Continuing Committee on Trade Negotiations, as well as individual working groups on each of the elements of the Agreement. Government expertise in each sector of the negotiations was drawn from all relevant departments, ensuring the closest interdepartmental co-operation. This level of consultation, unprecedented for Canada in international trade negotiations, ensured that all interests and advice were taken into account to the greatest extent possible in every element of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

This publication is one of a series of Canada-U.S. Free Trade Sectoral Assessments prepared by the Government on several sectors and issues such as agriculture, fisheries, energy, industry and consumers. Each Sectoral Assessment begins with a general discussion of the overall economic impact of the Agreement, based on the major study released by the Department of Finance. The Sectoral Assessments then examine the implications of the Agreement for the sector, providing background information, describing the elements of the Agreement and presenting an assessment of the economic impact on the sector.