

Canada and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN, founded in 1967 and comprising Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and soon Vietnam, is the most successful regional organization in Asia Pacific. Canada became an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 1977. Other Dialogue Partners are Australia, the European Union (EU), Korea, Japan, New Zealand and the USA. This dialogue partnership gives Canada special access to ASEAN to discuss issues of mutual concern.

For Canadian business, the ASEAN region is a solid market with fast growing middle-class consumer populations, a high demand for capital and infrastructure investments, and competitive production costs. Domestic markets are being progressively liberalized as new intra- and inter-regional trading patterns develop. In 1992 the ASEAN heads of government agreed to create an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). As of January 2003, AFTA's trade liberalization measures will be fully implemented to serve a combined market of some **350 million consumers**. This kind of economic cooperation facilitates the work of Canadian companies in both national and regional contexts in Southeast Asia. The transportation, telecommunications, power, environment and natural resource development sectors are particularly promising for the Canadian private sector.

The Canada-ASEAN relationship is becoming increasingly substantial. An Economic Cooperation Agreement signed in 1981 was revised in 1993. Economic talks take place in the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), which meets regularly at the senior officials level. Through the JCC, Canada is working with ASEAN to address specific market access problems, and is also exploring ways to improve Canadian market share in ASEAN as a whole, in the face of increasing regional and non-regional competition. In addition, the Canadian Foreign Minister, along with the other Dialogue Partner ministers, meets his counterparts at the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) every year.

Canada and ASEAN have founded a number of institutions dedicated to strengthening commercial and cultural ties between Canada and the ASEAN member countries. The **Canada-ASEAN Centre (CAC)** in Singapore works to:

- 1) raise awareness about Canada in ASEAN, and vice versa;
- 2) promote the Canadian private sector in ASEAN by facilitating Canada-ASEAN business relationships, and;
- 3) create and support innovative business and science and technology strategies that will increase Canada-ASEAN business and commerce.

The CAC also operates a number of joint projects with the **Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada**, an agency based in Vancouver, BC that runs cultural, educational, business and media programs which serve to strengthen Canada's involvement in ASEAN and in the entire Asia Pacific region. One of these programs is the **CanAsian Businesswomen's Network**, which works to improve women's access to business opportunities both in Canada and in ASEAN by offering valuable personal introductions and referrals in a member's target country. For more information, contact the Network's Canadian Coordinator at Tel. (604) 684-5986, Fax (604) 681-1370.

The CAC's Executive Director is Mr. Ian Robertson and its address is 80 Anson Road, #15-02 IBM Towers, Singapore 0207, Tel. (65) 225-7346, Fax (65) 221-7885. The CAC also has representatives in ASEAN countries, see *Appendix I* of this document for their coordinates. The Asia-Pacific Foundation's address in Vancouver is 666 - 999 Canada Place, Vancouver, BC, V6C 3E1, Tel. (604) 684-5986, Fax (604) 681-1370. Its Chairman is Mr. Michael Phelps.

In 1986 the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and each ASEAN country's national Chamber of Commerce and Industry created the **ASEAN-Canada Business Council (ACBC)**. The current Canadian Executive Director is Ms. Jai Mathu who can be reached at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Suite 1160, 55 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON, K1P 6N4, Tel. (613) 238-4000, Fax (613) 238-7643.

Canadian business associations in each of the ASEAN countries also work to support commercial relationships. Their addresses can be found in *Appendix I* of this document.