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Introduction

Canada's relations with Thailand cover a full range of activities: political, economic and commercial. Canada's interest in Thailand dates from Canadian participation in the Indochina Control Commission and the Colombo Plan in the 1950s. Relations have broadened over the years with Canada's increased interest in the region through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), its position as a major recipient of Indochinese refugees, its important development assistance program and rapidly expanding bilateral trade. More recently, in part because of Canada's privileged partnership with Thailand within ASEAN, regional and international concerns such as multilateral trade negotiations, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), Thailand's developing industrialized economy, regional security and Indochina, are now part of the ongoing dialogue between the two countries.

This survey reviews the nature and scope of trade and economic relations between Canada and Thailand over the last decade. The study focuses on bilateral relations, agreements and initiatives rather than the international and multilateral fora in which Canada and Thailand are both active participants (the United Nations, commodity groupings and other economic and social organizations).

Section 2 describes the current macro-economic environment of Thailand and its prospects for sustained economic and industrial growth in the short-term.

Section 3 provides an overview of Canada-Thailand commercial relations against the background of Thailand's global trade position and explains the evolution of trade between the two countries in terms of volume and composition. This section also summarizes Canada's export marketing efforts in Thailand as well as its export financing facilities and record.

Section 4 focuses on Canada's bilateral development assistance program in Thailand and highlights its major orientations. Included is a brief overview of related programs underwritten by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and other agencies such as the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Petro-Canada International Assistance Corporation (PCIAC).

Section 5 identifies the agreements and arrangements currently in place between Canada and Thailand which provide a basic infrastructure for the continued expansion of economic and commercial relations. It also identifies a number of economic initiatives currently under way in the sectors of co-operation highlighted in the Economic Co-operation Agreement as well as provincial initiatives in Thailand.