

# 20th Anniversary of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Twenty years ago on Oct. 4, 1987, Canada and the United States made international history when the two countries concluded negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Since the signing of this landmark agreement, two-way trade has quadrupled with almost \$2 billion in merchandise crossing the border each day. This week, I would like to review the development of this landmark agreement and to highlight the many benefits Canada has experienced as a result of being a part of it.

September 26, 1985, Canada proposed an

FTA with the United States. A little over one year later, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was finally negotiated between the two countries. A few months later, the Agreement was signed by then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and President Ronald Reagan. November 21, 1988, Prime Minister Mulroney's government was re-elected with a mandate to implement the FTA and successfully did so Jan. 1, 1989, when the FTA entered into force.

Since the agreement came into force, Canadians have come to recognize and

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appreciate the many benefits of the FTA, which has meant more opportunities for Canadian businesses and more jobs for Canadians. Furthermore, it continues to enjoy strong public support both in Canada and the U.S. by having a significant and positive impact on jobs, living standards, and on general competitiveness.

Today, 5.2 million Canadian jobs depend

on our trade with the U.S. Some studies have estimated that the expansion of exports (not solely to the U.S.) have accounted for about 75% of job creation in this country. A strong majority on both sides of the border (67% in Canada and 75% in the U.S.) also believe in the need to further deepen economic ties between our two countries. Moreover, recent polling suggests 73%

of Canadians and 77% of Americans recognize the positive role the FTA has played in supporting our current level of prosperity.

In another poll conducted by SES Research for Policy Options, two-thirds of Canadians and Americans agree that free trade is the foundation of our ability to compete globally. It also indicated that about three-quarters agree that free trade is important as we continue to enhance North American prosperity. Furthermore, the poll results suggested that the FTA is seen as a success in all regions of both countries in all age groups

and in all educational demographics.

Twenty years later, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement is still bringing prosperity and opportunities for both countries and their citizens. The continued support for this agreement by both countries will ensure free and fair trade needed for continued prosperity.

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