



Canada. I hope this programme will be enhanced and made permanent. I would urge Canada to expand the programme to enable Canadian scholars and students to teach, research, study or intern in Asean. Knowledge is a two-way street. We need young Asean citizens who are knowledgeable about Canada and young Canadians who are knowledgeable about Asean.

OTHER BRIDGES OF COOPERATION
Asean and Canada cooperate in many other areas. Canada supports Asean through concrete initiatives totalling over C\$90 million in funding. For example, in the realm of security, Canada currently provides more than C\$40 million in support of programmes that combat terrorism, human smuggling, and proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. Canada also supports programmes on disaster risk management, and has increased humanitarian assistance to South-east Asia. I referred earlier to the fact that, annually, Canada provides C\$5 billion of official development assistance to the developing countries. Most Asean countries have become either middle-income or high-income countries. However, a few members of our family are still in the low-income category and need help. In the period 2000 to last year, Canada provided C\$2.7 billion to these countries.

Asean and Canada share a common commitment to protecting the earth's oceans, biological diversity and atmosphere. We support the Paris Agreement on climate change. We want to grow in harmony with nature. Canada has much to share with Asean in those areas.

Canada is helping Asean's environmental agenda, through the Asean Institute of Forest Management, the Asean-Canada Forest Tree Seed Centre and the Asean Canada Fisheries Post Harvest Technology Project. Canada is also helping Asean's firefighters with its expertise in fighting forest fires.

PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP
Canada is both an Atlantic and Pacific country. Canada, as a Pacific power, and Asean share many common values and a commitment to promote peace, stability and prosperity. Canada is seeking to reduce its dependence on the US market and to increase its linkages with other Pacific countries. It will find Asean a good and willing partner.

Asean is already the world's seventh-largest economy and is projected to be the fourth largest by mid-century. Canada should participate actively in Asean's growth story.

In Canada, Asean will find an advanced country with world-class universities and Canada companies with a comparative advantage in oil and gas, infrastructure, clean energy, clean technology and water management. I am confident that given political will on both sides, the Asean-Canada partnership will have a bright future.

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By Invitation

Asean and Canada – building bridges across the Pacific

At a time of growing protectionism, both parties have even more to gain by building on existing ties. One possibility is a free trade agreement



Tommy Koh

For The Straits Times

I want to begin my essay by stating that I have a very positive attitude towards Canada. I served twice as Singapore's high commissioner to Canada when I was based at the United Nations in New York. During those 13 years, I met many Canadian leaders, including Canada's most famous and charismatic prime minister, Mr Pierre Trudeau, the father of the current Prime Minister.

Mr Trudeau and Mr Lee Kuan Yew were good friends and

mutual admirers.

As a UN man, I admire the Canadian statesman, Mr Lester Pearson, who proposed the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) during the 1956 Suez Crisis. UNEF gave birth to the UN Peacekeeping Force. I also admire the contributions Canada has made to help the developing countries, through the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

My good friend, Mr Maurice Strong, was the founding president of Cida. Two of my other friends, Mr Ivan Head and Mr David Malone, were also presidents of IDRC. Canada provides annually C\$5 billion (S\$5.3 billion) of assistance to the developing world. In short, Canada is a force for good in the world.

Canada became a dialogue partner of Asean in 1977. It has established a diplomatic presence

in all 10 Asean member states and has a dedicated ambassador to the regional grouping. The relationship between Canada and Asean is substantive and multi-dimensional. Let us look more closely at the relationship.

ECONOMIC BRIDGE

Let us start with the economic links between Asean and Canada. Last year, the two-way trade between Asean and Canada was C\$23.3 billion. Asean was Canada's sixth-largest trading partner. Canada was Asean's 15th-largest trading partner.

The two sides recognise that there is room to increase trade and investment between them. They also recognise that it is important for them to defend free trade at a time when it is under attack by protectionist forces. In 2011, they adopted the Canada-Asean Joint Declaration on Trade and Investment (JDTI).

In 2015, they adopted a five-year work plan to implement JDTI. The plan has four focal areas: small and medium enterprises, education, innovation and corporate social responsibility.

Asean has concluded many free trade agreements (FTAs) and comprehensive economic partnership agreements with its dialogue partners. Isn't it time to negotiate one between Asean and Canada?

Last year, the two sides agreed to explore the benefits and feasibility of such an agreement. The Canada-Asean Business Council (CABC), based in Singapore, has estimated that an FTA could increase trade by C\$11 billion by 2027.

The CABC is strongly in favour of such an agreement. The president of the CABC, Mr Wayne C. Farmer, has written that "Asean and Canada are two trade-dependent regions with complementary economies

and deep people-to-people ties... There has never been a more important time for Asean and Canada to seize the moment... CABC urges Asean and Canada to accelerate their partnership at this crucial juncture".

Since September last year, Canada has been engaging with its Asean partners in FTA exploratory discussions, towards a potential Asean-Canada FTA. Canada, along with Asean members Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei, is also a signatory to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

It is strategically important for Canada to enhance its economic links with South-east Asia at a time when the North American Free Trade Agreement is unstable and is being renegotiated.

EDUCATION BRIDGE

Canada has very good universities. One of the most important contributions which Canada can make to Asean is to help educate and train our talented young people. There are currently 23,000 Asean students studying at Canadian universities. A generation ago, the Colombo Plan enabled many students from this region to study at Canadian universities. Most of them returned to their home countries and contributed significantly to nation-building.

I am therefore very pleased that, in 2017, Canada launched a new scholarship programme, for five years with C\$10 million. The scholarships would enable Asean students to spend one academic year studying or researching in