early 1948, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom signed the Brussels Treaty, and pledged to build up a common defence system and to strengthen their economic and cultural ties.

But it was apparent, as Winston Churchill put it, that it was still necessary to bring in the New World to redress the balance of the Old. During the summer of 1948, representatives of the Brussels Treaty signatories and of Canada and the United States began discussions that ultimately led to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty of April 4, 1949. Prior to the signing of the Treaty, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Italy were invited by the negotiating powers to participate as signatories. In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined the 12 original signatory countries and in 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany also acceded to the Treaty.

In 1982, Spain joined the Alliance although, like France, its forces are not part of the Integrated Military Structure of NATO (France withdrew its forces from the Integrated Military Structure in 1966).

With change finally coming to the East, the Allies will face issues that are more complex than anything we have known in the past. At the same time, the potential for success is greater than what we had come to expect. The Alliance is the essential medium through which a more humane, just and secure peace can be achieved in Europe.

— Manfred Wörner, Secretary General of NATO, Davos, Switzerland, February 1, 1989.

The Canadian Role in the Birth of NATO
Canada played a key role in the formation of NATO. Two wars had taught Canada that it could not remain detached from developments in Europe and that it was infinitely more costly to fight a war than to act collectively to prevent or deter one.

Convinced that democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic had to work together in peace as they had in wartime, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs (and subsequent Prime Minister), Louis St. Laurent, put foward the idea of a single mutual defence system in the House of Commons in April, 1948. Mr. St. Laurent envisaged a transatlantic alliance that would link its members not only defensively, but also politically, economically, socially and culturally. This concept was pursued vigorously by Canadian representatives at the negotiations which followed that summer with the United States and Europe and helped Canada make an important contribution to shaping the form and nature of the Alliance. The broader Canadian vision of the Alliance was reflected in Article 2 of the Treaty which provides for non-military forms of co-operation.

The North Atlantic Treaty: Its Terms and Goals
The terms of the NATO Treaty set out the goals of the Alliance and the obligations of each member state. In both the preamble and the first article of the North Atlantic Treaty, members emphasize their support for the United Nations and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Subsequent articles of the Treaty dealing with collective defence are also set within the framework of the United Nations Charter, which gives states the right to individual and collective defence.

NATO members are committed to consult each other whenever "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened." Each member retains full status as an independent nation free to decide on the best means of providing mutual support. In Article 5, members have agreed to treat an attack on any one of them as an attack on all. Each member is committed to "take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."