



Statements and Speeches

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CALL FOR MORE SOLID LINKS BETWEEN FRANCE AND CANADA

Speech by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the France-Canada Chamber of Commerce, Paris, November 9, 1982.

Consider the following questions: How should Canada think of Western Europe and France? What should Canada represent for you? It is clear that the links between our two countries are rooted in a past that is replete with moments of glory and in our fraternal affection. But what can we say of our economic, social and cultural links today? Are our continents drawing closer together, or are they drifting away from each other? Is this a decisive time in the relationship between us?

Twice in less than a century our soldiers have died on your battlefields, but we Canadians have been slow to grasp the full meaning of what has been happening in today's Europe. Paradoxically, it has only been with the passing of a generation — the very generation which knew you best — that we have stopped seeing the Old World as being in a state of decline and started looking for Europe in the future rather than in the past. While we are indebted to the French people for New France, and while we are indebted to Europe for the best of our languages, institutions and cultures, we looked to the West in building our country. We have fashioned Canada out of half a continent, open to Asia and the Pacific as well as to the long horizon of the United States. Even if most of our people are of European origin — and even if the 59 000 who in 1759 saw the end of New France have become the six million French-Canadians of today — Europe, while important culturally, was more or less unknown on the economic and theological front.

Let it also be said that perhaps Canada was even further from European minds. However much those who constructed and unified Western Europe tried to be outward looking, their attention was focused on Europe. We were often made to feel that Canada's place in European interests was marginal, and that our interests could not escape the powerful pull exercised by our great neighbour to the south. No doubt, we did not make it sufficiently clear that our efforts to ensure our identity, unity, and independence also served the interests of the larger community of free nations. Because it is better to have a strong, self-confident partner than one that is dependent and unsure of itself.

As for the relations between our two countries, it is even more obvious in retrospect that they have not benefited as much as they should have from the rediscovery by France of a French linguistic and cultural community in Canada. This rediscovery, some 20 years ago, should have drawn us together to pursue our common interests.
