the same monarch as head of state, other members of the Commonwealth were not entirely "foreign" to Canadians.

The original motive for establishing the Department of External Affairs was primarily archival. Nowhere in the government did there exist, in 1909, a complete record of correspondence on matters of external bearing. Each government department communicated with foreign governments on external matters, through the governor general and without reference to other departments. As the complexity of international relations grew, the government attempted to ensure coherency in Canada's foreign policy by creating the Department of External Affairs.

At the end of the First World War, the Department employed only seven or eight people in Ottawa and had no diplomatic representatives abroad; at that time Canada's only foreign representation was the Trade Commissioner Service of the Department of Trade and Commerce, which sought to promote international trade. In 1919 Canada signed the Peace Treaty of Versailles as a separate entity of the British family of nations, marking the beginning of its evolving autonomy in international affairs. After 1920, the growth of Canada's responsibilities abroad and its expanding interests in international affairs could no longer conveniently be handled by the British foreign service. From then on, the Department began to develop into an agency for the direct administration of Canada's external relations and, in 1921, the office of the Canadian High Commissioner in London was placed under its control. In 1923 Canada (by authorizing a Cabinet minister to sign the Halibut Fisheries Treaty in Washington) for the first time asserted its right to negotiate and sign its own treaties. In 1925 an officer was stationed in Geneva to represent Canada at international conferences and to monitor the activities of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. A Canadian legation was opened in Washington in 1927, in Paris in 1928, in Tokyo in 1929 and in Belgium and the Netherlands in 1939.

After the Second World War began, Canada wanted closer contact with other members of the Commonwealth, with the allied governments and with certain other foreign governments. After Canada's (separate) declaration of war in September 1939, high commissioners were sent to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland. In 1942 ministers were appointed to the USSR and to China. A minister was accredited to a number of allied governments then located in London or Cairo: Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Norway, Poland, Yugoslavia. After the liberation of France the Canadian minister, following a period in Algiers as representative to the French Committee of National Liberation, returned to Paris (with the rank of ambassador). Another wartime development was the opening of several missions in Latin America.