

United Kingdom

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Member of Parliament for Barnet, Finchley, was appointed Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, and Minister for the Civil Service on May 4, 1979. She is Britain's first woman prime minister and, after winning two subsequent elections, the longest serving British prime minister in this century.

Born in 1925 in Grantham, Mrs. Thatcher was educated at Oxford, obtaining a degree in Natural Science and a Master of Arts. She spent four years as a research chemist and read for the Bar in her spare time. She was called to the Bar by Lincoln's Inn in 1954 and practised as a barrister, specializing in taxation law.

Mrs. Thatcher contested two parliamentary elections for the Conservative Party before being elected to the House of Commons in 1959. Her first ministerial appointment came in 1961, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Pensions and National Insurance. She was a front-bench spokesperson for the Conservative party in opposition and became a member of the shadow cabinet. On her party's return to office in 1970, Mrs. Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science and was made a Privy Councillor. She was chosen Leader of the Opposition in February 1975.

This will be Prime Minister Thatcher's 12th Economic Summit. She will be accompanied by Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Douglas Hurd and Chancellor of the Exchequer John Major. Mrs. Thatcher's personal representative is Nigel Wicks, Second Permanent Treasury Secretary.

Canada-U.K. Relations

Canada's relations with the U.K. are close, although they have changed considerably over the years. Two important events — the British entry into the Common Market in 1973 and, on the Canadian side, the growing concentration of trade with the U.S. and the Pacific Rim countries — have influenced the relationship. The development of the single European market and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement have heightened interest in the opportunities presented.

The U.K. remains Canada's most important trading partner in Europe, and third-largest single trading partner overall, after the U.S. and Japan. Two-way merchandise trade with the U.K. for 1989 shrunk slightly to \$8 billion, a decrease of 1.6 percent since 1988. The U.K. continued to enjoy a trade surplus of over \$1.1 billion due largely to North Sea oil exports to Canada. Canadian exports to the U.K. were down by 1.4 percent to \$3.4 billion, representing about 30 percent of all Canadian exports to the EC. Forest products, metals, ores and fish continue to head the list of Canadian exports to the U.K.