

Canada – European Community Political Relations

Canada has long devoted particular attention to its relations with the European Community (EC) and its 12 member states. The EC is Canada's third largest trading partner.

In 1976, Canada and the European Community signed a framework agreement to promote, diversify and develop commercial and economic exchanges. The two parties meet twice a year to promote and review economic activities.

In 1988, Canada and the European Community undertook to consult each other on foreign policy questions within the framework of the European political cooperation process. These semi-annual consultations involve the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and the Secretary's counterpart in the country which holds the EC presidency. (The presidency passes to a different member nation every six months.) Canada and the Community also carry out semi-annual consultations at the senior official level.

More recent events have helped emphasize the European Community's importance to Canada. The adoption of the Single European Act in 1985 re-invigorated the process of European integration. It helped turn the EC into a beacon for the emerging democracies of Eastern and Central Europe. A strong and increasingly united Europe has been a major factor in speeding German unification.

The intergovernmental conferences to consider economic and monetary union and political union will mark a further phase in the process of bringing Europe together. Canada is working to ensure its ties to the European Community keep pace.

Since the beginning of 1990, political relations between Canada and the EC increased appreciably. During the first six months, when Ireland held the EC presidency, Canada reinforced the existing consultation process and presented proposals for additional steps.

These initiatives were received positively by the EC in the final document of the Dublin Summit. The president of the European Community Foreign Affairs Council, Irish Foreign Affairs minister Gerard Collins, came to Ottawa in February 1990 for consultations with Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark, who returned the visit in May.

Canada and the European Community are drafting a declaration on Canada-EC relations for the 1990s. This declaration, and a similar EC declaration with the United States, will commit all parties to face together the challenges of the future. Mechanisms for political consultation will also be reinforced to permit Canada to increase its links with the rapidly evolving European Community.