

Canada-European Community Bilateral 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 second-largest trading partner.

In 1976, Canada and the EC 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 EC undertook to consult each other on foreign policy questions within the framework of the European political co-operation process. These semi-annual consultations involve the Canadian 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 EC also carry out semi-annual consultations at the senior official level.

Recent events have helped emphasize the EC'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 Central and Eastern Europe. A strong and increasingly united Europe has been a major factor in speeding German unification.

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

Since the beginning of 1990, political relations between Canada and the EC have 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.

In November 1990 Canada and the EC adopted a declaration on Canada-EC relations for the 1990s. This declaration will commit all parties to face together the challenges of the future. Mechanisms for political consultation will also be reinforced to include consultations among the Prime Minister of Canada and the presidents of the European Council and the Commission of the European Communities.