

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to welcome Frans Andriessen to Ottawa today.

Sir, your presence here symbolizes the growing importance of the European Community as a pillar of the international system. The Community, founded to bury old conflicts and build a new prosperity has met all the expectations of its ambitious founders. It is one of the great achievements of post-war Europe - perhaps its greatest.

The Community is already a great engine of prosperity and trade. The upcoming economic and monetary union in 1992 presents the prospect of even greater economic success. In addition, as the Community elaborates its co-operation in the political field, its centrality as a major player in international diplomacy is growing.

The European Community is playing a critical role in the evolution of the new Europe in the aftermath of the revolution of 1989. Indeed, contributing to these momentous events, the Community served as a magnet and an example to the centrally-planned economies of Eastern Europe. Its subsequent co-ordinating function in providing assistance to Eastern Europe has been a key factor in the success of that effort. The prospect of trade and investment between the Community and the emerging market economies of Eastern Europe is a force for stability and prosperity in the decade ahead.

Sir, Canada is ready to open a new and more intense phase in our discussions with the European Community on trade and political matters. The evolution of a strong united Europe must not be purchased at the price of reduced ties across the Atlantic. Those ties remain a priority for Canada economically and politically, and I know you share the view that enhanced links within Europe are entirely complementary with a re-invigorated relationship with others outside the region.

Your visit here provides an opportunity to demonstrate and discuss developments within the Community and the larger Europe. It also provides a chance to explore issues and problems which arise between us from time to time, as is inevitable in a complex economic relationship.

Canada is committed to an active engagement across the board in the new Europe, of which the Community is such an important pillar. Our talks this week have been an important contribution to that engagement and we look forward to further discussions with you and your colleagues in the weeks and months ahead.

Frans Andriessen is now the Vice-President and Commissioner for External Relations and Trade Policy of the European Community. In an earlier incarnation, he was Commissioner for Agriculture, a responsibility which brought him into intimate contact with Canadian agriculture and trade policy. He served three years as the Minister of Finance in the government of the Netherlands.