

The Canada–European Union relationship

L'Anse aux Meadows is where the transatlantic connection began. A thousand years ago Norse adventurers camped at this windswept spot on Newfoundland's northwest coast. A millennium later, Canada and Europe have a strong partnership based on kinship and shared culture, traditions, history and values. From the 1950s, as European integration took form, the Canada–Europe relationship has grown.

European integration started in 1952 with six countries interested in liberalization of the energy sector. From this beginning emerged the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and the European Atomic Energy Community—together known as the European Communities (EC). Over the years, the EC gradually turned into the European Union (EU), which now has 15 member states. They have moved toward greater political and economic co-operation, notably with the introduction of a common currency, the euro. Meanwhile another 12 countries have applied to join.

Canada was quick to develop ties with the new entity. In 1959, Ottawa decided to accredit an ambassador to the European Communities, and the first appointment was made in 1960. Initially this was the Canadian Ambassador to Belgium; a separate ambassador to the EC was named in 1973. A diplomatic mission representing the European Commission (the EC's executive) in Canada opened in Ottawa in 1976.

Numerous agreements covering a wide range of activities link Canada and the EU, the earliest dating back to 1959. These reflect only part of the expanding Canada–EU relationship. The EU has evolved from its initial economic focus toward a full range of interests and activities in such key sectors as foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs, and Northern co-operation; and the agenda of Canada–EU dialogue has kept pace, broadening and deepening steadily.



photos: CANAPRESS

Dwarfed by the cruise liner *Seabourn Sun*, the replica Viking ship *Fyrdraca* arrives at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, in July 2000—part of a flotilla retracing Norse voyages from Greenland to the New World 1000 years before.

Dept. of Foreign Affairs
Min. des Affaires étrangères

JUL 20 2001

Global challenges

With their shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the market economy, Canada and the EU often pursue similar objectives internationally. The result is close co-operation, both bilaterally and in multilateral forums, on such issues as combatting small arms proliferation, bringing in a universal ban on anti-personnel mines, and the urgent need of the international community to address the problem of war-affected children. Canada and the EU also pursue extensive dialogue at all levels on trade questions, particularly global trade policy issues being dealt with in the World Trade Organization.

Twice yearly, a Canada–EU Summit brings together Canada's Prime Minister, the leader of the country currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU (rotated every six months) and the President of the European Commission. In December 2000, Ottawa hosted a Canada–EU Summit; and this June a summit took place in Sweden, then completing its Council Presidency. Belgium assumed the presidency on July 1.

As the world moves toward greater democratization and economic integration, Europe and Canada are bound to draw still nearer together. At the time of the Canada–EU Summit last December, Prime Minister Chrétien said, "I have no doubt that the seamless ties of family, commerce and values that have made us such close friends and partners are really just a taste of what is to come." ●



Speaking to the media after the Canada–EU summit in Ottawa last December, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (centre) is flanked by European Commission President Romano Prodi (left) and French President Jacques Chirac.