



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Canadian Prime Minister in Europe—A new era in transatlantic relations



Instead of travelling to Washington, which until a few months ago would have been a natural thing to do, the new Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney travelled to Europe for his first foreign visit since taking office last Friday.

This visit reflects both symbolically and factually a shift in Ottawa's policy due to the confrontation with Donald Trump's administration and him personally, as well as an indication of the strengthening of relations with its historic allies in Europe.

With talks with President Emmanuel Macron and with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Prime Minister Carney is trying to strengthen the transatlantic coalition while the USA, as its most important factor, is making moves that weaken it.

"France and the whole of Europe work enthusiastically with Canada, the most European of non-European countries, determined like you to maintain the most positive possible relations with the United States," said Macron after the conversation with the Canadian Prime Minister.

Historical sentiments

Prime Minister Carney's first visit to Europe has had the effect he expected, namely strong associations with historical links to France and the UK. At the press conference with President Macron, he spoke in both English and French.

Last Friday, when he took office as Prime Minister, Carney said that his country was built on the bedrock of three peoples—French, British, and Indigenous.

In line with this announcement, Carney will be travelling to Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, Canada's northernmost Inuit territory, after Paris and London. The aim of this trip, as the Prime Minister announced, is to "reaffirm Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty."

We appreciate all the symbolic gestures but we need more public backing - Canadian official

The symbolism in the Canadian Prime Minister's first days in office is clear, but it alone will not be enough to provide an answer to the major challenges both Canada and its key European partners are facing in relations with the US.

"We appreciate all the symbolic gestures but we need more public backing," said a Canadian official to the BBC regarding PM Carney's visit to European capitals.

Ukraine—connection point

The alliance in practice will therefore be a much more complex political task than the inaugural visit of the new Canadian prime minister to Europe.

In this respect, both sides already have some political capital behind them, especially when it comes to supporting Ukraine in the days when Washington abruptly turns its back on its efforts to defend the country against Russian aggression.

The previous Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, together with European partners and under the organisation of the British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, took part in the Alliance talks, which were a sign of resistance to President Trump's intention to resolve the Ukraine issue without their involvement and, in particular, without the involvement of Kyiv.

Prime Minister Carney will certainly continue to participate in the activities of this bloc, as he follows the previous policy of his Liberal Party predecessor regarding Ukraine.

Canada and the Europeans have a common interest in strengthening their connections when it comes to the import tariffs imposed by the US

In addition, Canada and the Europeans have a common interest in strengthening their connections when it comes to the import tariffs imposed by the US last week, which they took as a declaration of a trade war and immediately retaliated.

During last week's G7 ministerial meeting in Quebec, Canada **received** significant symbolic support from its partners in the presence of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in response to Washington's rhetoric advocating for Canada to become the 51st US state.

Increasing the rating in the run-up to the elections

However, the **question** raised by The Economist, "Why Canada should join the EU?" is premature. As for Canada, it will be forced to find a compromise with its main trading partner in the south, where 80% of its total exports go. The same applies to the Europeans.

Both Canadians and Europeans demonstrate that they are not quietly experiencing a cooling of relations with America, and the recent European tour by the new Canadian prime minister is merely one aspect of the dissatisfaction caused by the new moves from Washington.



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For the security aspect of their alliance, in

addition to the agreement to continue support for Ukraine, Canada's announcement to review the agreement to buy American F-35 fighter jets, about which Defence Minister Bill Blair **spoke** last week, is significant. The same kind of "threat" regarding the F-35 purchase came just a few days earlier from Portugal, also a member of NATO.

Canadian Prime Minister Carney undoubtedly has a strong motive to demonstrate his commitment to the transatlantic partnership in the upcoming general election. It is expected that they could take place soon, perhaps even in April or May, well before the legal deadline in October.

The Liberals, led by Carney after the departure of Justin Trudeau, see an important electoral opportunity precisely in resisting Trump's verbal or real territorial claims. There is almost complete consensus among Canadians about this resistance, but also among traditional European allies, whom Mark Carney obviously gives foreign policy priority over the US.

His liberals, who until the arrival of Trump in the White House were almost written off for the possibility of forming the government again, have a steady upward trend and are already in the zone where they can think about remaining in power.

Although they are still in second place in the **polls**, at around 33.4% behind Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives, the Liberals are on an upward trajectory that, if it continues, could jeopardise the Conservatives' lead.

The symbolism of historical closeness with France and Britain, which is the central idea of Carney's mini-European tour, will, in this respect, give him and his party a boost in ratings.