

The importance of Canada in the world

Introductory remarks delivered during the panel entitled “Canada as a Middle Power in a Changing Global Order,” as part of the 15th Annual Orientation for Diplomats, organized by the Parliamentary Centre and Carleton University

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Ambassador Proudfoot,

Honorable O'Toole,

Diplomats,

Our topic is: Canada as a middle power. Certainly, Canada is not a superpower. It is not the United States; it is not China.

Canada is not non-aligned either; it is not equidistant from the United States and China. Canada, as a liberal democracy, a country in North America, a member of NATO, a G7 country, is strongly allied with the United States, although this alliance is strained under the Trump Administration.

However, without being a superpower, Canada matters in the world. It is one of the most admired countries there is. When people are asked in which country they would like to live if not in their own, Canada is usually on the podium or never far from it.

Humans appreciate:

- this country as large as a semi-continent, of sublime beauty, with Indigenous, French, and British roots, multicultural, with two official languages that are international languages;
- this North American country open to Europe and Asia, this tolerant democracy, diverse federation, exemplary rule of law;
- this country that has never deployed its brave soldiers in the world for reasons other than defending justice and democracy;
- This high-tech economy, on soil rich in resources, including critical minerals that will be essential for the energy transition, the digital transition, and rearmament;

- This energy and mining power, with forty percent of the publicly traded mining companies in the world located in Canada;
- This trading nation that has the largest network of free trade agreements among G7 countries, giving it access to nearly two-thirds of the global economy;
- One of the best banking systems there is, with pension funds that are among the most active infrastructure investors in the world;
- One of the most attractive countries for foreign investments, with exceptional financial stability: the lowest net debt in the G7, the highest credit rating (AAA), and a borrowing rate on financial markets nearly 100 basis points lower than that of the United States;
- The most educated talent pool in the OECD... according to the OECD;
- A country that believes in science and academic freedom, with thousands and thousands of university cooperation agreements on all continents;
- A country with strong companies in traditional defence sectors, such as Bombardier, De Havilland, and MDA in aerospace and space.
- A preferred partner in civil nuclear, with our unique heavy water natural uranium reactor technology – the Candu reactor; Furthermore, small modular reactors (SMRs) provide the opportunity to demonstrate continued Canadian leadership in the next generation of nuclear technologies; And Canada is one of the world’s largest uranium exporters.

Canada is multiplying robust agreements and partnerships with numerous countries in all areas: defense, security, the environment, civil nuclear, artificial intelligence, quantum, critical minerals, cybersecurity, intelligence, crisis management, oceans, transport, and innovation in general. These agreements and partnerships must not remain on paper; they must be fully implemented. It will be part of your job to make sure that this will be the case with your respective countries.

I will particularly mention the Strategic Partnership signed last June with the European Union, which marks the most comprehensive strategic partnership the EU has ever concluded with a non-EU country.

We cannot be satisfied with the status quo. The serious challenges we all face—geostrategic, technological, and eco-climatic—require Canada to do more in the world with your countries, on every continent, much more.

The Government of Canada announced in its latest budget that it intends to double Canadian exports in markets other than the United States within ten years. To succeed in doubling Canadian exports from 2025 to 2035 in each of your countries, this means that they will need to grow at an average annual rate of 7.18%. You will check for your country, but it is likely that this is a significantly higher rate than the average annual rate of the past ten years. This constitutes a considerable challenge that will require sustained performance well beyond recent historical trends.

Canada needs a positive and fruitful relationship with our great American ally. But we must also learn to be less dependent on him. By strengthening our trade and political ties with other continents, we will help each other make our economies more prosperous and more resilient to global shocks. Canada is therefore determined to accelerate and strengthen its political and commercial cooperation with your countries.

A lot of work ahead for you, ladies and gentlemen diplomats. No pressure !