



Peter Mackay Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce Speech

Cholmondeley Room and Terrace, House of Lords

Friday 5 May 2017 at 12:30

Thank you for those kind words Mr. President Swords, (William), Secretary of State Fox; Lords; Madame High Commissioner Charette; Dept. High Commissioner Kessel; Mr. Nigel Bacon; distinguished members of this Chamber; Ladies and Gentlemen; with special thanks to Victor Dahdaleh, (former President) and St. FXU President Kent MacDonald:

It is an honor and privilege to be invited to speak to you today, particularly in this historic surrounding and to this esteemed audience. I also know I follow in the euphemistic oral footprints of former Prime Ministers, Canadian and British Premiers, Ministers, and members of the Royal Family and celebrated citizens.

For almost 100 years, this Chamber has been an extraordinary forum to foster engaging discussion on trade, commerce, and security in the Trans-Atlantic world. It purveys critical information to parties who influence, and are influenced, in significant ways, impacting the citizens of both our countries and the broader world which we share.

Canada's relationship with the United Kingdom is strong, deep and enduring – that is without question – we have a shared history and prosperity for centuries that is part of the abiding link that will not falter. Our relationship with the European Union, though more recent, yet no less important to Canada's future prosperity and security. CETA is only the latest example of this. Our joint efforts to rebuild Haiti after the devastating earthquake there is a testament to how Canada and the EU have and will continue to work together on issues and challenges confronting the world.

Canada and the UK share a common history. While Canada and the EU will continue to pursue a common future.

I feel doubly blessed to be invited back as I spoke here in 2006, as a newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Conservative Government. Suffice it to say that much has transpired in the last decade, undoubtedly much transpired since last night – herein lies the challenge in today's rapidly evolving, 24/7 world of geo-politics.

In an age of sweeping change, disruptors and destabilization and the rise of populism and foreboding security threats, serious questions on the merits of globalization perpetual campaigning and instant reporting – the only certainty is that further change is inevitable, and agile adaptability a necessity for all nations and businesses.

Perhaps it was always thus. Arguably there have been even more volatile periods in our collective past. Certainly, past generations looked ahead to this time with similar anticipation and anxiety as we look to the future today..

In Canada, we recently commemorated the 100th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge, a coming of age for Canada. Many citizens of Canada and the UK gathered on that sacred French ground – living descendants and school children – active and retired forces personnel – they also attended the cenotaphs, Legions and church basements across our country to mark the occasion. We are a humble Nation, understated in our origins and reserved in our claims to the great events that shaped not only our Nation, but the history of the world itself in the last century and a half.

Perhaps more than any single event, Vimy Ridge signifies one rare place of pride that stands out. For on those four days, one hundred years ago in April, nineteen hundred and seventeen, amidst the gas and shells, the carnage, the full on raging horror of war, Canada struck a historic blow for the freedom of mankind. Our victory there didn't end or even turn the tide for the eventual allied victory, but it established forever the fact that Canada was a major force for good in the World.

Notably, with the support of British Artillery behind us, and a British General, Sir Julian Byng, leading us, a key victory was achieved. We proved to be a reliable ally, capable of standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the very best. We gave mightily to the cause that day and in those that followed, contributing our strongest asset: our finest citizens; the lives of our future leaders, healers, thinkers and builders; from a young Nation. Just 50 years after our Confederation.

While those brave souls lie in rest, alongside those of this nation, in the well kept cemeteries of the Commonwealth graves Commission near the sights of significant battles where they fell. Some also returned home forever altered and scarred by their service. Then, as now, we owe them our solemn commitment and the most substantial support available.

Sadly, more conflicts would follow and similarly we would be there, in "the thick of it" – WWII, Canadians landed on Juno Beach during the Normandy Invasion, took active part in the liberations of France, Belgium and Holland – sadly sacrificed greatly at Dieppe that ill-fated dress rehearsal for D-Day. Gave mightily again in Korea and in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and numerous and ongoing peace making and policing missions in far-off corners of the world.

Much is forgotten of the battles that occurred in what would become Canada in the colonial wars. The plains of Abraham and later, events which shaped Canada and our sovereignty. Of course the war of 1812. (We will call that a draw). Then as now Canadians were ready to lay down their lives in defence of our national interests and to defend our way of life.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation on July 1st, it is notable and ironic that Canada still considers itself a young nation knowing we are now amongst one of the oldest nations on earth operating continuously under most of its original Constitutional provisions. For a democratic nation this is a singular achievement and like so many other milestones in our history this make us among the most envied nations in the world. This would not be possible without the willingness of Canadians to contribute disproportionately with regard to our size to the defence of freedom and democracy far from our shores.

I submit that we had a military before we had a country. It was composed initially of soldiers from two founding nations and our Aboriginal people, but soon became populated by Canadians of many diverse back grounds, which make up our proud diversity today.

I note that we have never started a war, but we finish them. Our desire is always to leave behind peace and stability and independent opportunity.

But, we are not only close allies, who have shared forward operations bases in Afghanistan, and joint exercises in searing heat of desert and frigid winters or endless skies, brothers and sisters in arms. We have come through this fire together, emerged from the cauldron, tempered by the heat but also bonded by the cause.

The last time I was in London, in March, you endured yet another terrorist attack. Having personally lived through the experience of the attack on our Parliament in 2014, which was eerily similar. A lone gunman entered our House of Commons and heart of Democracy after killing an unarmed soldier, standing guard at the National War Memorial, then injuring a House of Commons security guard and eventually falling in a storm of bullets outside the Government Caucus Meeting Room in the Hall of Honor of our Parliament. An audacious assault by a depraved, radicalized individual whose mind was corrupted like so many others by some distorted version of Islamic faith. It failed miserably and, like your experience, I am proud that, but for a brief interruption that day, and the solemn respect and reverence paid for those who were killed or injured and those who rushed into harm's way, we got on with it. Parliamentary sitting resumed at the usual time the next day and the business of the nation continued unabated.

The disruptors, delusional criminals, and the terrorists, fail and fail again in attempts to intimidate and remove our faith and shared values and our lives went on.

Our way of life may be a bit more watchful and wary, but we overcame these attempts to foster fear and loathing – fanatics lose. We share your trait of resilience and perseverance, proud traditions of overcoming adversity and commit to the struggle to combat terrorism everywhere.

Like our original settlers we are bound by a common desire for a better life, free from war, we are countries tested and true to a singular belief and common foe. So many of our citizens are sons and daughters of this land. Our embrace of democracy, rule of law and love of freedom all can be traced to these shores.

As former Prime Minister Mulroney spoke so eloquently to this august body, one year ago – we have much common DNA, particularly when it comes to our economies and with trade and trade disputes – we have recent experience in both – having successfully negotiated and signed the CETA – and embarked on what we hope will be a renewal and re-invigorated NAFTA. Trade issues are top of mind in Canada and particularly among the heads of state in Ottawa and Washington, as well as among head offices of our industrial and resource sections of both nations.

The success of NAFTA is beyond any dispute, in spite of ardent critics and insidious fake news and incendiary claims, it is the world's most successful trading relationship and most prolific and profitable trade agreement ever signed between nations. It has raised the GDP of all three countries and has stood the test of time. Despite some recent, heated rhetoric the reality is that modernization, as in most cases, is sensible, practical and timely.

Canada's relationship with the United Kingdom is strong, deep and enduring. That is without question.

We have fought, died and prospered alongside each other for centuries. Here in Europe and around the world. This is unlikely to change.

Our relationship with the European Union is much more recent but no less important to Canada's future prosperity, security and stability.

Canada has partnered with the EU on policing in Afghanistan, combating piracy off the horn of Africa and coordinating aid and development throughout Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Our joint efforts to rebuild Haiti after the devastating earthquake there is a testament to how Canada and the EU have and will continue to work together on issues and challenges confronting the world.

Canada and the UK share a common history. But Canada also wants to chart a common future with the EU. What Canada would like to see, perhaps more so than any other country, is that both the UK and the EU continue to work together with Canada and others to ensure that the common future we all desire is secure from global threats, economically resilient, and delivering measurable and increasing benefits to all the people who reside within our borders.

The EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, commonly known as CETA, is only the latest example of Canada working on North American and European prosperity. CETA is a new and progressive trading model which creates an economic bridge bringing together the 450 million person strong market of North America with the 500 million person strong market of Europe.

Interestingly, the CETA negotiations were launched 8 years ago today, May 5th 2009. Political agreement on the main points was achieved in October 2013, with the completed text signed by Prime Minister Harper, European Council President Von Rompuy, and European Commission President Barosso in September 2014. Finally, after three more years, and periods of great uncertainty, CETA is at the point where it should go into provisional application by the summer.

Despite the delays, we want this model to work, and I am sure you would share this view. Especially since Great Britain championed its cause from the beginning.

Not surprisingly, I have been watching developments here and the continent, along with others in North America.

We should all accept and understand that the people of Britain have made a democratic decision to leave the European Union after more than forty years of membership.

I have also heard the strong and resolute commitment of the British government to the effect that while the United Kingdom is leaving the European economic union - not withdrawing from its global role.

That is reassuring.

It is reassuring because I am here today to speak to you about how I see Canadian interests being impacted as these tectonic shifts start to bite and to share with you some thoughts that I would hope both sides of the negotiation would keep in mind as they move forward.

However, I do not think the goal of achieving a prosperous common future beneficial to the people of both the citizens of the UK and the EU is helped by tweeting the results of confidential discussions and personal political attacks.

Both parties need to be at the table and bring with them the good will and trust needed to achieve a result that benefits both sides, not the agendas of select individuals.

One only has to look at recent history to show how Canada has worked closely with the EU and the UK to address some of Europe, and the world's, biggest challenges.

In 2010, Canada supported the bailouts of Greece and Ireland through its seat at the IMF and by helping to backstop the 750 billion euros to ensure financial stability in the eurozone.

In 2011, alongside our NATO and European partners, we were part of the air campaign that toppled Gadhafi led by Canadian Air Force General Charles Bouchard from Naples.

In 2014, we joined the EU in imposing sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian officials responsible for the illegal annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Ukraine.

Starting in 2015, Canada took in 25,000 Syrian refugees directly from camps in the Middle East to help take the pressure off our allies in the region and Europe.

And in a few months, Canada will be leading a brigade - alongside the UK and the US - to shore up defences in the EU's Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

We clearly have an interest in what goes on here in Europe and in the countries and regions close to you.

We don't just have "skin in the game" when it comes to the future of Europe. We have bones in the ground.

It's why the decision the UK has made to withdraw from the EU is of vital concern to us.

Not the fact that it has happened - the people have spoken and the result is clear - but how the next phase of this period of great uncertainty unfolds.

Let me touch on some of the things Canadian's would like to see as part of a negotiated departure from the EU.

First, the continuation of tariff free cross border trade in goods between the UK and the EU. This will preserve established supply chains of which Canadian business and investments form an integral part on both sides of the channel.

Second, preserve the high level of cross border trade in wholesale financial services between the UK and the EU. This will maintain financial stability in the near term while creating the conditions for Canadian financial firms to assist in broadening and deepening the EU's own capital markets union.

Third, ensure mutual access to each others airspace, transportation links, energy markets, and telecommunication networks. Canadian pension funds have invested heavily in the infrastructure to support these sectors in the UK and in the EU. We would like to keep doing so but need stability in the regulatory environment.

Fourth, convert the rights of UK and EU citizens working and living across the EU to a permanent residency status akin to what Canada confers on those who arrive from third countries looking to build a better life. The citizens of the EU caught up in Brexit should not pay an undue price for the implications of the UK's decision to withdraw.

Fifth, make sure that historical grievances and internal political divisions do not undermine the prospect of mutual cooperation, economic stability and security once the UK formally withdraws from the EU.

The UK is withdrawing from the EU in accordance with its constitutional history and in compliance with the Treaties of the European Union.

Divorces are legal. And they can get messy. But they don't need to harm the children caught up in the fray.

It may be unwelcome to many - both in the UK and the EU - but it has and will occur.

Both sides need to recognize this and do what needs to be done to mitigate the effect it will have on their economies, security and people.

But the Article 50 alarm clock is ticking. Once it goes off, neither party can press snooze, roll over and hope to awake as if from a bad dream.

And a great deal of work needs to be done if both the UK and the EU are to continue to build on forty years of shared prosperity, stability, security and growth.

While divisions clearly exist.

Bridging divides is something Canadians seem to be quite good at and know a bit about.

Under Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson we worked with our UN colleagues to facilitate the creation of what would become the revolutionary concept of "Peacekeeping".

Under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, we led the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

More recently, we helped to facilitate the rapprochement between the US and Cuba.

And we have tirelessly and relentlessly supported and defended the principles of justice, human rights, democracy, religious freedoms, economic growth, and the rule of law at home and around the world.

There is nothing that we can teach either the UK or the EU on these issues.

These are traditions and values that we are proud to share with you.

As our friends, and dare I say "family", embark on what will be an onerous process, the conclusion of which we cannot predict, I would simply ask that there be an emphasis on ensuring that the elements of mutual interest and shared values not be lost in the heat of negotiation.

We who have been beside you in good times and bad look to you in the UK and to our friends in Brussels to keep the mutual interests I have described above top of mind over the next two years.

I remain steadfast in my belief that mutual interest should be the guide as Britain and the EU define their future relationship.

Canada and Europe are inextricably linked by history and common values.

Our blood is in your soil.

Our prosperity and security have been assured through unity of purpose and willingness to accommodate our unique contributions to our joint endeavours.

All that we ask is that two of our closest friends - two of our most valued past, present and future global partners - bridge the gaps that presently divide you and renew your commitment to a common, prosperous and secure future for Europe and us all.

Thank you.