

Prime Minister Carney address to the European Parliament

September 17, 2026

Strasbourg, France

President Metsola, President von der Leyen, honourable members of the European Parliament, distinguished colleagues.

Thank you for granting me the honour of addressing you all at the beginning of this decisive session.

Today, I will speak to you about how our response to the current geopolitical rupture should incorporate a new dimension.

But before that, I'd like to speak about something older.

Something that dates back to long before the relationship between the European Union and Canada.

Because the depth of our ties cannot be measured by trade, nor are they enshrined in our treaties.

Our ties are deeply rooted to our lands.

In the heart of Germany, above Weimar, there is a wooded ridge called Ettersberg. For decades, Goethe walked, thought, and wrote there.

An oak on that ridge came to bear his name, a living monument to the highest ideals of European culture.

As the 20th century turned dark, that same oak became trapped behind the barbed wire of Buchenwald, a silent witness to humanity's deepest moral failure.

Goethe understood that ideals must be fought for, that values do not defend themselves. Indeed, at the end of Faust, the old man's last vision is of a free people on free ground.

Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben, der täglich sie erobern muß.

"Freedom and life must be earned every single day."

Every day. Not once in 1945, or 1956, or 1989. Every day, including this one.

Freedom was won thanks to the heroism of the European resistance during the war.

It was cultivated by the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community in the aftermath of the war.

It was fostered by the creation of the European Community.

It was preserved through the establishment of the European Union.

And it grew through its expansion following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The values embodied by the Goethe oak have also endured, in part, because the ideals that flourished beneath its branches crossed the Atlantic.

In 1917, amidst the devastation of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a young Canadian Lieutenant named Leslie Miller gathered a handful of acorns from the shattered European landscape. He carried them home and planted them in Canadian soil in Milliken, Ontario, where they grew into a majestic forest.

A century later, a profound circle of renewal was completed. Grafts from Leslie Miller's Canadian oaks were repatriated to France and replanted on the same Vimy ridge where they had been born.

This is the essence of the Canada-European Union partnership. Seeds, values, ideas, trade, people, and progress carried back and forth across the Atlantic for centuries.

We are not fair-weather allies. We do not pursue zero-sum deals. Our commitment to the rule of law, and our unyielding defence of human dignity, individual freedom, and democracy share the same deep roots, the same unwavering dedication.

We hold common values, for which we have always fought, and in whose defence we must always remain vigilant.

We believe that a strong economy is not an end in itself, but the means to a just society. We are committed stewards of our natural heritage. We believe that our prosperity grows when it is shared.

This is a sharing of choice, not coincidence.

In his writings, Goethe borrowed a word from the chemists of his day: *Wahlverwandtschaften*. The elective affinity of different elements that combine because of their inherent attraction.

Canada and Europe are not bound by geography, even though our Danish friends know that we do share a 3,000 km border in the Arctic. We are bound by an affinity – elective, chosen, and renewed, and stronger for being so.

Today, our societies are being shaken by new storms: the upheaval caused by climate change, the erosion of democratic norms, the weaponisation of trade.

The multilateral institutions on which we relied have been weakened.

Sovereignty and openness are now difficult to reconcile. Economic integration is now being weaponised, and tariffs are being used as a means of pressure. Financial mechanisms are being used for coercive purposes. Supply chains have become vulnerabilities to exploit.

Technology is transforming the nature of warfare, the structure of economies, and the ability of states to govern.

Technology platforms increasingly seek to act as sovereign powers. They want to dictate the rules of regulation – and even circumvent them. They want to control our data, spread misinformation, and steal our children's childhoods.

This combination is a ferocious storm. A single tree will come down in it. A forest will not.

That's because beneath the forest floor, the roots of an oak intertwine with those of its neighbours, exchanging nutrients, adding strength to strength, creating a resilient, self-sustaining ecosystem.

Together, Canada and the European Union can anchor our ground to hold our values while forming a protective canopy under which our citizens can thrive.

This is about sovereignty. Our ability to live as we wish. It is about the freedoms we must fight for, every day.

Sovereignty requires resilience – the ability to withstand shocks.

Sovereignty goes beyond being able to feed, fuel, and defend ourselves. It now requires secure access to AI, semiconductors, critical minerals, payment systems, clean energy technologies, vaccines, and space-based communications.

We all have important gaps in these strategic capabilities, and we each must rely on individual nations or companies to fill them. This creates vulnerabilities, particularly when supposedly “global” companies prove national in the breach.

Closing these gaps is not possible alone, but it is very achievable collectively.

Canada and Europe are each strong. Europe and Canada are stronger together.

The institutions we have inherited are organised by geography. The strategic capabilities we need are organised by function. We can ally by function, if we are bold and deliberate.

We should not be cowed by the perceived scale of the task.

Just as dominance is the arrogance of the hegemon, perfection is the enemy of the good. The economics are clear: the leverage of the powerful in an exploitive relationship collapses well before complete independence is achieved. Because diversity confers advantage.

The objective is not self-sufficiency. It is collective resilience.

It's this mutual advantage that is at the core of the case for a deeper partnership between Canada and Europe.

Europe brings market power. Research depth. Advanced manufacturing. The ability to set standards that the world frequently adopts. A defence industrial base being rebuilt at speed.

Canada brings energy at huge scale and in every form the transition requires. One of the world's largest endowments of critical minerals. Deep capabilities in space, AI and quantum. Amongst the strongest banking systems in the world, and the most expert pension capital. Unique Arctic geography, and privileged access to both Atlantic and Pacific networks.

Where our strengths differ, they complement. Where they overlap, they create scale. We should build on each other's strengths – deliberately, systematically, and rapidly.

We have already begun with the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), one of the world's most successful trade agreements. And I thank President von der Leyen and President Costa for our Strategic Partnership Agreement struck last June. We're developing that and deepening it. We're also taking advantage of Canada's role as the first non-European member of SAFE.

But we should recognise the ecosystem we have built is not yet equal to the ferocity of the changing climate. Nor is it moving fast enough to match the speed of the upheaval.

Yesterday, President von der Leyen spoke of moving beyond CETA to an alliance for the future – opening the door to Canada becoming the European Union's first associate member. Canada welcomes this ambition – polling shows an overwhelming majority of Canadians support much closer ties with Europe.

An alliance for the future is a unique, positive approach that we will define together, building on our common strengths and based on shared values.

So let me say plainly what Canada proposes.

Canada and Europe should secure our strategic autonomy through deep cooperation in the full range of strategic capabilities, including critical minerals, defence industrial capacity, AI and compute, energy security, space, and payments.

We should move toward seamless, digital trade in non-agricultural goods and a wide range of services.

We should deepen our people-to-people ties, allowing our youth to live, work and study where they want on either side of the Atlantic.

Canadian membership of Erasmus+ can give your students, and ours, more opportunity to learn at some of the world's top universities, to broaden their horizons, and to build lasting ties that will sustain our alliance for the future.

Canadian membership of the next generation of Horizon would allow us to pool resources, cooperate on frontier technologies, and leverage our world-class research institutes and universities.

Yesterday, President von der Leyen announced a "new European Corporation on Critical Raw Materials" to obtain and stockpile the material needed for electric cars, chips and batteries, clean technology, and defence. Canada has deposits of over 34 critical minerals, and we are among the top producers of the 10 most essential for the world's energy transition. Our alliance can help fill Europe's need for reliable supply, Canada's need for advanced processing capabilities, and our common objective to build complete value chains.

Canada can contribute LNG and hydrogen at large scale to support Europe's energy security including by developing and leveraging new port infrastructure in the High North and on our East Coast. We, in turn, can benefit from your leadership in many clean energy technologies.

We can pool new sovereign compute capacity and build more secure broadband connections between Europe and Asia via our common geography.

Canada and Europe can join forces to develop AI safety protocols, coordinate common standards, and strengthen transparency, all while developing applications so our governments and companies can serve our citizens better.

Canada and Europe should also consider exploring an integrated market for financial services to broaden choice and reduce costs for our citizens, improve access to capital for our companies while maintaining our world-leading financial resilience.

The opportunities that can be created by an alliance for the future are, most fundamentally, the product of our common values, our compatible systems, and our complementary strengths.

Deepening and widening our relationship will strengthen our sovereignty, improve affordability, opportunity, and security for our citizens, while safeguarding our ability to live our lives as we choose.

I want to be precise about what I am not proposing. I am not proposing a third bloc in order to become a great-power rival – only with better manners.

We do not seek power to dominate others. On the contrary, we are pursuing resilience so that no one can control our open markets, impair our sovereignty, threaten our territorial integrity, or undermine our freedoms, our democracies, our rule of law.

Those motivations, combined with our latent hard power, mean we can help to create the next just, stable, and prosperous world order.

A Canada-EU alliance would create a beacon for other democracies.

An alliance not defined by what we oppose, but about what we are for: freedom, solidarity, prosperity, sustainability. An alliance that builds resilience for what it allows us to do for our citizens, and our citizens to do for themselves.

An alliance strong enough so that no one can dictate our choices. An alliance open enough that others can join. An alliance principled enough that our strength reinforces international law rather than replaces it.

To conclude, in my country, it is often said that Canada became a nation during the battle of Vimy Ridge. Certainly, the thousands of Canadians who did not return from that battle sacrificed their lives for something much bigger than themselves.

One who did come home stopped first to pick up some acorns.

Today, the same Vimy oaks grow in Canada and in France, living proof that what we cultivate together can survive the darkest winter to thrive again.

So, let us now deepen these roots, widen this canopy, and grow a transatlantic forest under which our citizens can flourish as free people on free ground.

Every single day.

Thank you.