Canada weighs EU associate status plan

LEVEL B2


Photo: Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What comes to mind when you hear European Union?
2. How do trade disputes affect people in your country?
3. Which regions does your country cooperate with most, and why?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

associate
Connected to a group without being a full member

membership
The state of belonging to an organisation or group

tariffs
Taxes charged on goods imported or exported

sovereignty
A country's right to govern itself independently

bloc
A group of countries acting together for shared aims

dispute
A serious disagreement or conflict between sides

framework
A basic structure that guides an agreement or system

autonomy
The ability to make decisions without outside control

III. READING

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney welcomed an EU proposal for Canada to become its first associate member, telling the European Parliament in Strasbourg that Canada and Europe are "stronger together". The status does not yet exist, and any new membership model would need agreement from all 27 EU states.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen proposed "opening the door" to this plan. Carney said the alliance could focus on defence, technology, energy security and critical minerals.

He argued it would support sovereignty and strategic autonomy, while insisting it was not about forming a new power bloc or seeking full EU membership, but a different framework.

The move comes as Canada and the US are in an escalating trade dispute, with each side imposing tit-for-tat tariffs after talks collapsed last month. US President Donald Trump called the idea "laughable" and threatened very serious tariffs on Europe if he viewed it as hostile. Carney said the plan could be a "beacon for other democracies".

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Canada welcomes EU proposal to become...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who suggested opening the door to Canada's associate membership?
2. Where did Mark Carney deliver his remarks to lawmakers?
3. What warning did the US president give about the proposal?
4. Which areas of cooperation did Carney highlight?
5. Is Canada seeking full EU membership according to Carney?

V. DISCUSSION

1. What benefits and risks could Canada see from closer EU ties?
2. Should regions create new membership models, or keep current ones?
3. How do tariffs change companies' and consumers' choices?
4. Is sovereignty easier to protect alone or with allies? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past perfect continuous

Use had + been + verb-ing to show an action that was continuing up to a past time (duration before another past event).

*"Officials **had been discussing** membership details before the summit."*

*"An analyst **had been warning** of escalating tariffs for weeks."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using the past perfect continuous (had been + verb-ing).

1. My aunt (sell) ___ goods to the US for years before the tariffs. _____
2. An analyst (study) ___ trade ties for months before the proposal. _____
3. Exporters (worry) ___ about tariffs for months before the plan. _____
4. Before talks collapsed, teams (prepare) ___ response plans for days. _____
5. When Carney spoke, the trade dispute (grow) ___ for weeks. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach key items that carry meaning here: associate, membership, tariffs, sovereignty, bloc, framework, autonomy; elicit quick examples to check understanding.
- Run the reading twice: first for gist (what is proposed and by whom), then for detail using the questions. This story touches international politics and trade, so keep the discussion on policy choices rather than personal beliefs, and invite students to comment on the news rather than on themselves.
- Differentiate by task: stronger students list two pros and two cons from the text and their own ideas; others underline sentences in the text that show benefits or limits, then paraphrase them in pairs.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Board likely benefits first (trade, security), then push for risks; require one example each.
2. Run a quick vote, then pair students from opposite sides to swap one argument each.
3. Elicit one company example from your country, then ask for a matching consumer effect.
4. If answers stall, prompt with ‘alone: flexibility’ vs ‘allies: shared strength’, then justify.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare 2-minute speeches for or against associate status, then hold a class vote.

Writing: Write a 120-word news brief summarising the proposal and Trump’s reaction for a school site.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past perfect continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who suggested opening the door to Canada's associate membership?
   Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president.
2. Where did Mark Carney deliver his remarks to lawmakers?
   At the European Parliament in Strasbourg.
3. What warning did the US president give about the proposal?
   He threatened very serious tariffs on Europe if he saw it as hostile.
4. Which areas of cooperation did Carney highlight?
   Defence, technology, energy security and critical minerals.
5. Is Canada seeking full EU membership according to Carney?
   No. He said it was a different framework, not full membership.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use had + been + verb-ing to show an action that was continuing up to a past time (duration before another past event). (Examples constructed.)

*"Officials **had been discussing** membership details before the summit."*

*"An analyst **had been warning** of escalating tariffs for weeks."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using the past perfect continuous (had been + verb-ing).

1. My aunt ___ goods to the US for years before the tariffs. **had been selling**
2. An analyst ___ trade ties for months before the proposal. **had been studying**
3. Exporters ___ about tariffs for months before the plan. **had been worrying**
4. Before talks collapsed, teams ___ response plans for days. **had been preparing**
5. When Carney spoke, the trade dispute ___ for weeks. **had been growing**