

Liam Razzell

### [Could Canada join the European Union? A University of Victoria professor thinks not](#)

Amy Verdun, who founded the school's European Studies Program, says U.S. tariffs helped spur the discussion

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As tensions rise in Canada's already strained relationship with its closest ally, the United States, some, including a former German foreign minister, have suggested the Great White North could join the European Union.

Results of a recent Abacus Data survey of 1,500 Canadian adults indicate there's some appetite for the idea: 44 per cent of those polled think the Canadian government "definitely or probably" should look into joining the European Union, while 34 per cent are opposed to it.

However, Amy Verdun, a professor of political science at the University of Victoria, who founded its European Studies Program in 1997, thinks it's unlikely Canada will become the bloc's 28th member state.

"That's one of the most fascinating discussions that we've been seeing in the last couple of weeks because of the bellicose language by the U.S. administration," she told Black Press. "By 'bellicose', I mean partly the language around that Canada could become part of the U.S."

At a press briefing on March 12, the European Commission's chief spokesperson, Paula Pinho, told reporters the results of the poll highlight "the attractiveness of the European Union."

"On a possible E.U. application, we will not go into that," she added. "There are criteria foreseen in the treaties which foresee what is necessary for an application for accession to take place."

Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union provides the legal basis for countries looking to join the bloc, which states that any European country may apply. It's unclear how Canada would qualify under this criterion, but when Morocco applied to join the bloc in 1987, the E.U. rejected its application on the grounds that it isn't a European country.

According to Verdun, all E.U. countries must agree on accession applications, which could prove difficult, as applicants have to align key policies with the union's.

“Some of the policies are more difficult than others,” she said. “For instance, agriculture could be a major obstacle because it’s a big deal in the E.U. how much money is spent on [it], and to adjust Canadian agriculture to E.U.-level agriculture might take more time than one might expect.”

Even if bloc states were to agree to Canada’s membership, the process could take years, added Verdun. Turkey, for example, applied to join in 1987. Accession talks stalled in 2016.

“There are a lot of things that would have to be resolved before Canada could be part of the E.U., and many of these enlargement procedures have taken a very long time,” said the professor. “If you look at the negotiations between the E.U. and, say, central and eastern European countries or ... Austria, Sweden and Finland, it still takes a couple of years.”

Verdun explained the topic wouldn’t be a point of discussion if the Canada-U.S. relationship hadn’t soured.

“It is extremely unlikely to have percolated up to the agenda without this behaviour of the United States,” she said. “If the United States stops with that tomorrow, then I think we’d have some serious healing to do, but we would be able to go back to business as usual.”

As the trade war persists between once friendly neighbours, the likelier possibility, then, is that Canada seeks to strengthen trade and defence relationships with its European partners, added Verdun.

“There’s a lot of space for Canada and the E.U. to come closer without having to make legal changes,” she said.