

## Diplomacy This Week

# Rosy words, media frenzy marks EU Day

ANCA GURZU

Chatter House



Those who regularly attend the Europe Day reception know very well this is one of those special diplomatic events on the calendar that—along with the familiar ambassadorial faces—brings together a bevy of high-profile Canadian Cabinet ministers, politicians, business reps, and Foreign Affairs officials.

It has also become the venue for official speeches to include numerous references to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement that Canada and the European Union have been negotiating since 2009. These references are usually filled with positive projections about the deal's benefits, backed up by statistics enumerated throughout. This year was no different—except that this year the atmosphere appeared to be a little...different.

You see, while Canada's major news publications have only sporadically been casting an eye over CETA throughout the last few years, that's recently changed. The more the deal's conclusion increasingly became delayed and the more politicians became less committed to a set deadline, the more Canadian journalists piled on to cover the



Trade Minister Ed Fast speaks at Europe Day.

story. There have been several sometimes-contradictory stories in the last months over the future of CETA. One minute, it's full of momentum. The next, it's delayed.

On top of that, just a day before the Europe Day reception on May 9, Natural Resources Minister **Joe Oliver** threatened to take the EU to the World Trade Organization over its proposal to classify oil sands crude as more polluting than other types. The next day, however, Mr. Oliver played down the idea of a trade tussle.

Also not long ago, an EU court upheld the EU's seal product ban, which infuriated seal fur advocates here.

And there is more. On May 6, the WTO's appeal body upheld complaints from the EU and Japan that Ontario's green energy program broke world trade rules.

Add to that Canada's suspected opposition to let in the EU as a permanent observer to the Arctic Council, as well as the ongoing, but much quieter now, dispute about visa requirements on three EU member states—

and you got yourself a pretty good party!

EU Ambassador **Matthias Brinkmann** strategically got the party started about half an hour earlier than scheduled. Surrounded by about a dozen journalists, the ambassador outlined the current CETA sticking points, as well as his thoughts on Canada's WTO threat. His remarks made headlines within hours.

Following a well thought-out schedule, Trade Minister **Ed Fast** also had a short scrum with reporters about five minutes before the official start of the reception. They were eagerly seeking his reactions to Mr. Brinkmann's comments.

But soon enough the questions ended and the frenzy stopped. As they took the stage one after another, both EU and Canadian officials talked once more about the strong relations between the two parties. Foreign Minister **John Baird** praised the work of **Catherine (whom he called Cathy) Ashton**, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, describing the EU as a real force for good in the world.

Mr. Fast brought a more personal tone, saying five of his siblings are married to Europeans. He said Canada and the EU are "natural partners," and—following tradition—said negotiators are making progress and hoping to conclude the trade deal soon.

Mr. Fast announced that Canada is now part of the Enterprise Europe Network. Steered by the European Commission, the network is made up of more than 600 business-support organizations that will help small-

Continued on Page 28

## Embassies bring in sweets for good cause

Continued from Page 2

and medium-sized companies take advantage of opportunities in the European market. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters is Canada's lead organization in the network. Its president, **Jayson Myers**, whose name was repeatedly mentioned during speeches, also attended the event.

So while there was no big CETA announcement this time, those paying close attention may be inclined to read the Enterprise Europe Network announcement as a sign of what's to come next. Maybe it was enough to temporarily reassure those who started worrying.

The word in the diplomatic community is that officials are waiting for the final seal of approval on the trade deal so that they can also get the green light on another Canada-EU summit, something the two parties used to hold every year (with one exception) since 2000. That pattern stopped three years ago. The last summit was in 2010, coincidentally of course, around the same time as the complexity of the CETA talks were coming to the foreground. Perhaps there hasn't been much to celebrate since then?

### Diplomatic delicacies

Dozens of people waited eagerly in a line that snaked around the main room of the Shenkman Arts Centre in Orleans on May 8 for a chance to dip a strawberry in a warm and flowing chocolate fountain. Hundreds of guests attended the first annual Desserts of the World Festival, an event organized

in support of St. Mary's Home, an Ottawa-based social service agency that helps young pregnant women, and young moms and their children.

Guests were mingling for hours, carrying small white cardboard plates with an assortment of dessert samples. Both Ottawa Mayor **Jim Watson** and former CTV host **Max Keeping** spoke to the crowd, extending their support to the work of St. Mary's Home. Mr. Keeping's foundation donates yearly scholarships to the organization to award to young women.

Among the many vendors of ice cream, cupcakes, and other goodies were several embassies, presenting their best sweet treats. Not all of them stayed very long (perhaps because their desserts disappeared quickly due to popularity), but they did bring delicious samples with them.

The Australian High Commission offered guests a taste of the Lamingtons, a traditional Australian sponge cake with jam inside, which is dipped in chocolate (*Chatter House's* favourite!). The embassy of the Philippines brought banana rolls and Buko Pandan, prepared using coconut and screwpine leaves.

There were also the Kuih Lopes from the Malaysian High Commission, which are rice cakes with palm-sugar syrup, wrapped in banana leaves. Taiwanese officials brought rich and crumbly pineapple shortcake, while the embassy of Azerbaijan brought pakhlava (same as baklava).

*Chatter House* is already looking forward to next year's mouthwatering event!

agurzu@embassynews.ca  
@Ancagurzu



Delicious frosted cupcakes and Malaysian Kuih Lopes.