

COMMENT

Will Canada and the EU move in together?

A breaking point with the U.S. can no longer be waved off. If Canada's wagon were hitched to the EU's horse, it would be a major player in the organization, its fourth largest economy. The theory behind the EU—an integrated entity of sovereign democratic states—is consistent with Carney's vision as articulated at Davos.

Nelson
Wiseman

Opinion



TORONTO—A year ago, I wrote a column noting that Canadian values and interests have much in common with those of the European Union. While Canada remains ineligible to join the EU, the world is rapidly changing. New international configurations are emerging. Most Canadians think EU membership is worth exploring, although they may reject the idea once they learn of downsides such as the EU's complex regulations, exposure to economic issues in other member states, and reduced national sovereignty. Nevertheless, the impossible has become plausible.

Admission to the EU remains unlikely, but no longer as unforeseeable as a year ago when Mark Carney became prime minister. Since then, Canada and the EU have been steadily dating. Will they move in together? Flirtation has only increased with both signalling they want to become more intimate as an antidote to the erratic isolationist and unilateralist orientation of the United States under President Donald Trump.

Perhaps Britain will show Canada its future. It is only a matter of time before London seeks readmission to the EU. British public opinion is supportive, the city's mayor deems it "inevitable," and Whitehall is actively pivoting toward Europe in both economic and security policy.



Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, 2026. Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrick

Within hours of being sworn into office, Carney flew to Paris and London. During the 2025 election campaign, he left the hustings for Europe a second time. Never before has a prime minister left the country during an election campaign. By late September, he had taken 13 foreign visits, five of them to Europe. Unlike the largely perfunctory foreign travels of Justin Trudeau, Carney has spent time with foreign leaders at home and abroad to conduct serious business. For example, he invited India's Narendra Modi to last year's Kananaskis summit, and in Beijing he opened Canada's door to Chinese EVs.

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A NATIONAL FOCUS ON NEW APPROACHES TO LIFE SCIENCES IS URGENTLY NEEDED

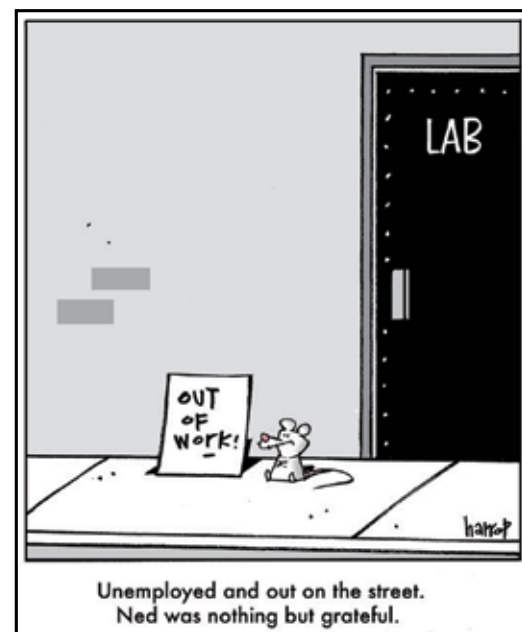
The accelerated pace of a global transition toward animal-free science means Canada must prioritize human-based, human-relevant research and testing methods.

It is crucial that Canada's health research be innovative, cost-effective, reliable and reproducible. The best way to meet all those needs is by using non-animal, human-based methods. Innovative tools like organ chips, organoids, and bioprinting are already being used to replace animals in a variety of applications, including disease modeling precision medicine and regulatory toxicology. They use human cells, tissue and data to replicate human-specific biology and disease characteristics and have enormous potential to revolutionize medical research and testing.

These exciting and proven New Approach Methods also have the potential for vital cost savings and efficiency gains as well as addressing environmental concerns, sustainability and offering very real promise of cure for human injury and disease. By founding a central base in Ottawa where animal-free methods can be developed, validated and through strategic partnerships



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commercialised, our government can ensure that Canada will be at the forefront of this growing and anticipated multi-billion dollar industry.

US agencies have already implemented changes. In April 2025, both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) made groundbreaking announcements to reduce and replace animals in drug testing and disease research. The FDA stated: "There is growing scientific recognition that animals do not provide adequate models of human health and disease." NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya, MD, Ph.D., wrote: "For decades, our biomedical research system has relied heavily on animal models, With this initiative, NIH is ushering in a new era of innovation." In

just this past month, the NIH has announced more than \$150M funding for the development, validation and standardization of new approach methodologies,

The Government of Canada must also embrace these changes. Here are some specific ways it could do so:

- 1** End the federal requirement that drugs be tested in animals.
- 2** Provide sustainable, long-term funding for a national centre for the development, validation and acceptance of non-animal research and testing methods. Long-term funding for a national center dedicated to NAMs is needed to align Canada with leaders like the UK, which is strengthening infrastructure and oversight. Designate part of the recently announced \$552M funding for research labs and equipment to ensure Canadian researchers have the necessary tools and training to lead in the Life Sciences.
- 3** Direct Canada's major funding agencies such as CIHR and NSERC to transition funding toward non-animal approaches. Amend regulations to recognize and support NAMs as the gold standard, replacing animal use wherever sophisticated alternatives exist. Support the goal of eliminating the use of animals in this country's laboratories on ethical, scientific and cost effective grounds.

By harnessing the brilliance that exists in Canada's R&D sector and combining it with political will and financial support, this is the moment to bring Canada to the forefront of countries whose biomedical researchers are accomplishing lifesaving breakthroughs, all without resorting to invasive and untenable experimentation on animals.

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