



## **Speech**

**by Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at the State Banquet  
hosted by David Lloyd Johnston,  
Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada,  
and Mrs. Johnston  
on September 24, 2014  
in Ottawa**

Thank you so much for this wonderful welcome today! I would like to begin to saying this: Thank you for the fascinating day of our visit to your country that you organized for Daniela Schadt, our delegation and me!

Germans associate Canada primarily with open country, endless horizons and amazing natural beauty, as portrayed in many coffee table books and television programs. Today I sensed something more. There is another form of openness here in Canada, by which I mean an impressive openness in people's hearts and minds, a mental freedom which sparks mutual interest and makes every personal encounter enriching. I am delighted that we have developed such a warm-hearted rapport so quickly.

That is largely down to you, Governor. Right at the start of my trip you invited me to plant a tree of friendship in the park at Rideau Hall. I am confident that it will continue to flourish as well as it has done so far, for the ground for both the tree and our close bilateral relations has long been prepared, and we know that it is fertile.

Our countries are bound by a partnership of values which goes back many years. Peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law, commitment to pluralism and respect for human rights worldwide – we can include all this on our common list.

And yet we know that we have no grounds for complacency. Transatlantic relations may be a success story, but we cannot afford to

take them for granted. At a time of crises and wars, which in recent years have often been asymmetric and irregular, we are called to continue and rethink our cooperation. The list of challenges is long. It includes Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine, covering climate change and the fight against poverty, right up to ebola. Whenever the international community is called upon to act, the expectations people place in politically stable and competent states such as Canada and Germany are especially high.

How can we do justice to these expectations? I would like to use the coming days to discuss the many aspects of the relationship between our two countries. Our partnership of values has a particularly high priority, particularly in view of the global crises we are currently facing. As a founding member of NATO, Canada is one of the guarantors of German security. This was particularly evident in the past, for 400,000 Canadian service personnel were stationed in Germany from 1951 to 1994, helping to build bridges between our countries. They were not the only bridge-builders, but they played an important role. I am just as thankful for this as I am for the fact that today Canada is still a key partner for us, a partner who continues to work to promote security and cooperation in Europe. Your engagement for Ukraine bears clear testimony to this.

During my visit I would also like to address our bilateral ties in the narrower sense as well as foreign and security policy. For example, I would like to learn more about integration policy in Canada. And not only because several million of your people have German roots. I am interested in both the structural issues and the attitudes that an immigration country faces. How does your country handle being an adopted homeland for so many people from all over the world? We Germans can gain important and helpful experience in this area.

I would also like to focus particularly on business and technology. Or rather, we would like to, because a business delegation interested in precisely these issues is accompanying me. I am grateful that this is the case. My sincere hope is that the contacts forged by this visit will help to deepen and expand our good business and academic relations. The reasons for this are clear; just think of the huge task we have of safeguarding our energy supply in the long term in a responsible manner.

And right now here in Ottawa we can see how the Canadian Government and the European Union are striving to further intensify their cooperation with a Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). That presents us with an opportunity to take our relations to a whole new level, for we want to create more jobs, we want to shape globalization as democracies instead of merely responding to it. Shaping means, for example, ensuring promotion of the rule of law, social and

environmental standards. Of course, I am aware that the German people have questions and criticism regarding certain parts of the Agreement. This debate must be conducted. I am all the more delighted that tomorrow I will have plenty of opportunity to discuss the issue with parliamentarians and business representatives.

In this spirit, ladies and gentlemen, may the bridges we build always be stronger than the storms that sometimes sweep across the Atlantic. I invite you to raise your glasses to our host, Governor Johnston, to his wife and to the future of Canadian-German relations!