

At his home in Ärna last night President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met Canadian Foreign Trade Minister Peter Van Loan who, as an influential Member of Parliament and government politician, was instrumental in the Canadian government's decision to grant Estonian citizens visa-free entry to the country.

The Estonian head of state and Van Loan discussed transatlantic cooperation at the levels of both NATO and the European Union.

"Like all of the European Union's Member States, Estonia is interested in seeing the free trade agreement between the union and Canada entered into as quickly as possible," President Ilves said. "I hope the fourth round of negotiations, which is due to take place in Brussels this week, will bring us significantly closer to this broad-ranging, ambitious agreement."

Speaking of relations between Estonia and Canada, President Ilves said that the two countries were good partners and dependable allies in NATO and transatlantic cooperation generally.

"What's central here is that we tend to look at the world in the same way and take the same view of problems," said the Estonian head of state. "Our contribution to ensuring stability in Afghanistan and that part of the world as a whole is a sign of that."

Minister Van Loan, who has Estonian roots, has served in a variety of positions in the Canadian government and parliament for many years. His mother and grandparents, who are originally from Harju County, fled Estonia during World War II. The President of the Republic bestowed the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana, 2nd class on Van Loan in 2009 for his efforts in developing relations between Estonia and Canada.

President Ilves meets influential Canadian government politician

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