

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Third Part of the 2019 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe and Parliamentary Mission to Italy**

Strasbourg, France and Rome, Italy

June 24-28, 2019

REPORT

From June 24 to 28 2019, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Strasbourg, France, and Rome, Italy, to participate in the third part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and as part of a bilateral parliamentary mission to Italy. The delegates were Mr. Francesco Sorbara, MP and head of the delegation; Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator; Hon. David Wells, Senator; Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet, MP; Mr. David Tilson, MP; and Ms. Salma Zahid, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Josée Thérien, and Association Advisor, Mr. Maxime-Olivier Thibodeau.

PARTICIPATION IN THE THIRD PART OF THE 2019 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

On June 24 and 25, the delegation participated in the third part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), for which Canada has observer status. The delegation was joined in Strasbourg by Mr. Alan Bowman, Deputy Head of Canada's Mission to the European Union (EU) and Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe.

A. Overview of the Agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

During the delegation's two-day participation in the part-session, the following topics were debated in the Assembly and in its committees and political groups:

- Strengthening the decision-making process of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning credentials and voting;
- Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee;
- Joint debate: Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021; and Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021;
- Joint debate: The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges; and Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality.

The Assembly also heard from the following speaker:

- Ms. Amélie de Montchalin, Secretary of State attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, in charge of European Affairs, representing the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

B. Canadian Activities during the Session

1. Overview

Members of the delegation participated in PACE proceedings, including plenary proceedings and committee meetings. Members also attended meetings of political groups represented in the Assembly.

In addition, the delegation met with a representative of the European Court of Human Rights, was briefed by Mr. Bowman and met with the Secretary of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, better known as the “Venice Commission.”

2. Meeting at the European Court of Human Rights

The delegation met with Ms. Pamela McCormick, a registry lawyer for the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on 24 June. The ECHR is an international court set up in 1959 that rules on individual or state applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights set out in the *European Convention on Human Rights* (the European Convention). Since 1998, it has been sitting as a full-time court to which individuals can apply directly. Ms. McCormick explained that judges of the ECHR are elected on behalf of Council of Europe member states, but they do not represent member states: they only represent themselves.

Ms. McCormick emphasized the importance of the right of individual petition, noting that individual applications – in which governments are not implicated – represent the most cases heard by the ECHR. The Court also hears inter-state cases, which are more rare. She explained that applications to the Court can be rejected on administrative grounds, when an application has not been filed properly, for example, which represents between 15% and 20% of cases. Under such circumstances, it is possible for the applicant to reapply.

Ms. McCormick explained that applications can also be rejected on judicial grounds, when the available domestic remedies have not been exhausted, for example. She also noted that many frivolous cases are filed with the ECHR (mental health cases; cases filed by conspiracy theorists; sad cases that do not fall under the European Convention’s jurisdiction, etc.).

Ms. McCormick explained that the current backlog of the Court is a problem; it is due to the sheer number of applications: 43,000 applications were received by the ECHR in 2018 (approximately 60,000 applications, including cases that were rejected). Of those 43,000 applications, more than half were filed against four countries: Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and Romania.

Ms. McCormick added that the ECHR’s backlog can also be explained by the fact that some member states are overwhelmed with applications. In her view, the Court is trying to overcome the backlog, but the delays are not always its fault. In some cases, she noted that parties may ask for adjournment, and in other cases, internal proceedings at the member state level cause delays. In Italy, for example, the length of legal proceedings is influenced by regional variations.

According to Ms. McCormick, the right to a fair trial – which is provided for in Article 6 of the European Convention – is the most commonly used grounds to apply to the ECHR. She noted that property issues are also very common.

In answer to questions from the delegates Ms. McCormick mentioned that, as a result of Brexit, U.K. judges appointed to the Court could not be as senior members of the judiciary as for other member states.

In answer to questions from the delegates pertaining to the impact on the ECHR of Russia's lack of financial contribution to the Council of Europe; Ms. McCormick argued that the impact would be felt more strongly in other places than at the Court. It has, however, had an impact on recruitment, on the function of the Court, and on its ability to deal with the volume of cases.

3. Briefing by Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe

The delegation then met with Mr. Bowman, who reminded the delegation about the role of Canada as an observer in the Council of Europe, in both the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. In Mr. Bowman's view, the Council of Europe is a great window into European politics for Canada.

Mr. Bowman noted that Canada's development assistance has tended to focus more on the poorest of the poor countries, in Asia and Africa, rather than on Eastern European countries via financial contributions through the Council of Europe. He argued that Ukraine is an exception in that regard, because of Canada's special contribution.

According to Mr. Bowman, the Council of Europe is an interesting forum on new emerging issues, as the *Convention on Cybercrime* – which was ratified by Canada in 2015 – demonstrates. The Council of Europe is also a forum for cultural cooperation. Mr. Bowman noted that Canada contributes one million dollars annually to the *European Support Fund for the Co-Production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works*, known as "Eurimages", and argued that Canadian filmmakers get more in return.

Mr. Bowman noted that Canada joined the Venice Commission as a full member in early June 2019. Warren Newman, an expert in constitutional law from Justice Canada, is now working for the Commission.

Regarding the joint debate scheduled at PACE on the *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* – the Istanbul Convention – and gender equality, Mr. Bowman noted that Canada's agenda on violence against women and gender equality is exemplary for many European countries. He explained that the Istanbul Convention exists because violence against women is perceived differently than "gender-based" violence in certain European countries. Some opposition to the Istanbul Convention is based on the definition of "family" or "marriage" that is used in certain countries. Answering questions from the delegates in that regard, Mr. Bowman argued that, in theory, Canada could adhere to the Istanbul Convention, and added that no country outside Europe has signed it so far.

Answering questions on the implications of Brexit given the coming change in leadership, Mr. Bowman explained that different teams of negotiators in Brussels and London could lead to a different outcome. According to Mr. Bowman, the impact of the European Parliament election on the Council of Europe will probably be marginal.

Regarding the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU, Mr. Bowman recalled the current provisional application of the Agreement, which is an unusual process for Canada, and the two-step process required for ratification in the EU. Mr. Bowman noted that 13 EU member states have ratified the

Agreement so far, and that Italy is not among them. As a basis for comparison, he noted that it took five years for the EU-Korea free-trade agreement – which is similar to CETA – to be ratified. Mr. Bowman argued that, in theory, CETA could be provisionally applied forever.

The Italian government, for example, has been saying that there is insufficient protection for geographical indications (GIs). Regarding Italy's economic situation, Mr. Bowman noted the problem with the country's debt and deficit, as well as the banking sector, which is also a source of concerns because one bank going bankrupt could have a domino effect. Mr. Bowman also noted that, even if it has economic problems, Italy has a very important production basis.

4. Meeting with the Secretary of the Venice Commission

On June 25, the delegation met with Mr. Thomas Markert, Secretary of the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters.

Mr. Markert explained that the role of the Venice Commission is to provide legal advice to its member states and, in particular, to help states wishing to bring their legal and institutional structures into line with European standards and international experience in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

He recalled that Canada is a party to some Council of Europe partial agreements, such as the Venice Commission. Canada had been an observer with the Venice Commission since 1991 and joined as a full member on 12 June 2019. Mr. Markert noted that Canada's contribution to the Venice Commission, which is approximately 50,000 Euros annually, is more than the contribution of many countries.

Mr. Markert explained that non-European countries were not allowed to be full members of the Venice Commission, at first. Rules have since changed, allowing Canada to become a full member.

According to Mr. Markert, the fundamental rights that are mostly at stake in the Venice Commission's work are freedom of assembly; the obligation to establish a constitutional court (which can give direction to governments) – or give the Supreme Court the powers of a constitutional court; and the independence of the judiciary, which comes with the need for institutional guarantees. He noted that this last obligation has been an issue in countries like Poland and Hungary. In the same vein, he noted that limiting the powers of prosecutors and imposing an obligation on them to respect a strict hierarchal structure is also an issue.

Mr. Markert explained that the basis for the Venice Commission's work is the European Convention; the Commission also applies certain Council of Europe standards regarding judges, including several recommendations from the Committee of Ministers in that regard. In the area of democracy, he expressed concerns about countries that are adopting a presidential system mirrored on the French system (in which the president has extended powers), because of the risk that it could allow an authoritarian government. He added that these concerns apply to former Soviet countries, in particular. For example There is a conflict in Ukraine between the parliament and the presidency.

Mr. Markert mentioned that the Venice Commission has been very active with respect to Ukraine in recent years. Among the problematic issues in Ukraine Mr. Markert mentioned corruption and the approach of Ukrainian courts that do not dare prosecute influential and powerful politicians or business people. He noted that Ukraine has put in place proper anti-corruption measures but argued that cases are not brought before the courts as they would normally be under these measures.

Mr. Markert explained that the Venice Commission has recommended term limits for presidencies; but they have been abolished in certain countries, such as certain Latin American countries. He explained that the Venice Commission also often gives advice on electoral legislation. In that regard, the Venice Commission has been recommending a proportional system in many cases; the mixed system, in his view, has led to some abuse in certain cases, such as in Ukraine and Moldova.

Mr. Markert noted the importance of the independence of the judiciary in the work of the Venice Commission. He explained that, normally, the Venice Commission's work starts following a request from a member state; but it can also work following a request from an organ of the Council of Europe (usually from PACE or the Monitoring Committee, which follows the member states' obligations).

In answer to questions pertaining to Council of Europe member states opposing the Istanbul Convention, Mr. Markert explained that Bulgarian officials, for example, argue that their constitution cannot comply with certain aspects of the Istanbul Convention that are not clear, such as the definition of the word "gender," which is subjective, in their view.

C. Canadian Interventions in Assembly Debates

Mr. Sorbara, Senator Ravalia, Senator Wells, Ms. Boutin-Sweet and Ms. Zahid participated in Assembly debates during the part-session, making six interventions in total on a broad range of topics. Links to the delegates' speeches are available on the PACE website.¹

1. Monday, June 24, 2019

Senator Ravalia delivered a speech on "Strengthening the decision-making process of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning credentials and voting."

2. Tuesday, June 25, 2019

Senator Ravalia delivered a speech, in the context of the joint debate on "Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021," and "Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021," in which he recalled the nature of Canada's participation in the Council of Europe and the different forms of Canada's financial contribution to the organization.

In his closing remarks, the rapporteur – Mr. Mart van de Ven – [said the following](#):

¹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Verbatim Records, [2019 – Third-part session](#).

I think it's having said that [that PACE's budget should be increased] I can thank Mr. Ravalia for his speech. I thank Canada for the support, the financial support but also otherwise that Canada gives to this very important international institution on Human rights.

Mr. Sorbara, Senator Wells, Ms. Boutin-Sweet and Ms. Zahid all delivered a speech in the context of the joint debate on "The Istanbul Convention on violence against women: achievements and challenges," and "Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality."

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The rapporteur who wrote the report on the Istanbul Convention, Ms. Zita Gurmai, [noted](#) in her closing remarks that the cost of violence against women is approximately 1.5 trillion US dollars, which is comparable to the size of Canada's economy. She also expressed her thanks that "so many Canadians" spoke on this issue in the Assembly.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO ITALY

On June 27 and 28, the delegation participated in a parliamentary mission to Italy, in Rome. During that mission, the delegation met with Italian parliamentarians, a representative from the Italian government, representatives from international organizations, academics with an expertise in Italian politics, and representatives from the private sector. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from Canada's Embassy to Italy.

The discussions held during these meetings pertained to key issues in Canada-Italy and Canada-EU relations, including CETA; and other important issues facing Italy and the EU, including migration.

Briefing with the Embassy of Canada to Italy

On June 27, the delegation met with Her Excellency, Alexandra Bugailiskis, Ambassador of Canada to Italy, as well as Permanent Representative to three specialized agencies of the United Nations based in Rome: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Ambassador Bugailiskis was accompanied throughout the mission by the embassy's staff: Mr. Christopher Burton, Minister Counsellor (Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Section); Ms. Anna Kapellas, Counsellor (Political and Economic Section); and Ms. Cristina Faessler, Political Affairs Officer.

With respect to Canada-Italy relations, Ambassador Bugailiskis reminded the delegation that Italians abroad vote for representatives in Italy; Francesca La Marca is the current representative for North and Central America. She also recalled the importance of the agreements between Canada and Italy on drivers' licence and on youth mobility.

She also recalled that it is the 70th anniversary of Canada's involvement in World War II, and that a piazza in Rome is named after Canadians. She emphasized the importance of defence cooperation within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Regarding

cultural cooperation, Ambassador Bugailiskis noted that Canada was recently named country of honour at *La Biennale di Venezia*.

Meeting with Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies

The delegation then met with Ms. Marta Grande (M5S), President of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies, and with members of that committee: Mr. Andrea Colletti (M5S); Mr. Vito Comencini (Lega); Ms. Michaela Biancofiore (Forza Italia), and Ms. Francesca La Marca (Partito Democratico).

Ms. Grande mentioned that some EU member states have not ratified CETA yet, because of issues related to intellectual property and investors-States relations. She noted that the trade balance between Italy and Canada represents 2.6 million Euros, in favour of Italy. Ms. Grande also mentioned that the issues of GIs and counterfeit products are important for Italy. She emphasized the importance of the contribution made by the Italian community to Canada's economic growth. She also noted that the Italian government enjoys an excellent collaboration with the Canadian embassy.

Mr. Colletti argued that Italy and Canada share similar values and principles, in addition to being bound by history, recalling the sacrifice of many lives on both sides during the two world wars. He also noted that this is currently a period of change in the Italian parliament, where new people are appointed to committees, for example.

According to Mr. Comencini, the EU should have a different approach towards Italy regarding – among other things – culture, agri-food and immigration. In his view, the issues related to these areas are not being dealt with properly by the EU. He also argued that there are threats to the EU, but that NATO is not focussing on the right priorities to address these threats. Mr. Comencini argued that the reasons for Italy's opposition to CETA are clear, but he believes that there is some leeway for reaching an agreement in the future.

Ms. Biancofiore mentioned that Italy and Canada share similar challenges related to their relations with Africa and Eastern Europe. She argued that if both countries stopped exporting weapons to these regions, for example, it could have a real impact. She also mentioned the case of Libya, which poses important and complex challenges for Italy. According to Ms. Biancofiore, Italy is very active in the Sahel region and Sub-Saharan countries on issues such as immigration and terrorism. In her view, Italy needs to support these countries' development. As terrorism is surfacing again in Sub-Saharan countries and a new ISIS is being formed, Ms. Biancofiore argued that we need to fight these phenomena together. She also mentioned that certain issues are stemming from demographic changes: the exodus of people fleeing war situations, but also the increase in population. Ethiopia, for example, will have a population of approximately 200 million people by 2050.

In answer to questions from the Canadian delegates on the current situation regarding Russia at PACE, Ms. Grande recalled that her party, M5S, has always considered that the Russian delegation should be in PACE. She mentioned that the Italian delegation to PACE was divided on the issue and that the current government in Italy would like to develop a different approach in relation to the dynamic at PACE. In her view, the presence

of the Russian delegation is important because it allows for a dialogue in an international forum, which is the *raison d'être* of the Council of Europe.

Regarding the vote in PACE this week related to Russia, Mr. Colletti added that there are issues rising from the sanctions against Russia that were renewed recently, which are not in Italy's interests. He argued that relations with Russia should be pursued, because they are in Italy and the EU's interests. Regarding Italy's relations with China, Mr. Colletti argued that Italy was behind in terms of trade and that China is an enormous and expanding market in which Italy and the EU should position themselves as counterparts. In his view, the EU is not present enough on that field and important steps will be needed from the new European Commission.

In answer to questions from the Canadian delegates on the issue of migration, Mr. Colletti argued that it is difficult to change minds about the fact that Italy is a country of immigration and no longer of emigration. He argued that the Dublin Regulations should take into account the large number of asylum claims received by Italy. In his view, Italy has been paying the price of disorganized immigration, which has had a negative impact on the Italian population. He expressed the hope that the new European Commission will make step forwards regarding immigration, because Italy feels that it has been left alone with the problem.

Finally, Ms. La Marca noted that 140,000 Italians live in Canada and that a large number of Canadians have Italian as a first language. Regarding CETA and reform attempts pertaining to qualified workers and the labour market, she argued that we should focus on the concrete needs of the individuals involved. She also emphasized the importance of the contribution made by young Italians who are educated abroad and come back to Italy.

Meeting with the Italy-Canada Bilateral Friendship Section of the Chamber of Deputies

The delegation met with the Italy-Canada Bilateral Friendship Section of the Chamber of Deputies. Mr. Colletti, President of that group, argued that the challenges posed by climate change will need to be dealt with together, but that collaboration will be difficult to achieve with developing countries. In his view, that discussion should take place at the United Nations. Mr. Colletti also insisted on the importance of improving the current youth mobility agreement between Italy and Canada.

Mr. Gianluca Rizzo (M5S), who is also the President of the Standing Committee on Defence of the Chamber of Deputies, emphasized the importance of the friendly relations between Italy and Canada. He noted that there is also an industrial cooperation between the two countries, on war ships, for example. He also argued that it is important for Italy and Canada to control the maritime space.

Mr. Colletti noted that the *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership* (or TTIP, a proposed free-trade agreement between the EU and the U.S. negotiated between 2013 and 2016 without conclusion) negatively influenced the debate about CETA.

Meeting with Representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration

The delegation had a working lunch with Mr. Roland Schilling, a representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) office in Italy, and Mr. Federico Soda, a representative from the International Organization for Migration's Italy office. Mr. Martin Doucet, Counsellor at the Canadian embassy (Immigration Section) also took part in that meeting.

Mr. Doucet argued that the issues of migration and trade are interrelated. Mr. Doucet presented Canada as an international example to follow on how to deal with migration, insisting on the benefits of the private sponsoring program. He also emphasized the importance of a renewed youth employment agreement between Italy and Canada.

Mr. Soda recalled that he has been in Rome since mid-2014, when the issue of migration from the Mediterranean became an issue for the whole EU. However, it would be a mistake, in his view, to think that migration was not a problem before. The main changes that he witnessed in the last years include the deteriorating situation in Libya, and EU legislation that was amended to make it illegal for member states to push back migrants. Mr. Soda noted that 170,000 migrants were rescued the year of those legislative amendments. He also noted that migration is a very divisive issue in Europe at present; it threatens the Schengen Agreement.

Mr. Soda also mentioned that approximately a year ago, the government policy changed in Italy. He argued that the *Aquarius* – a search and rescue ship operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (that ended its operations in December 2018) – not being allowed to disembark its rescued passengers was a big issue at the time. According to Mr. Soda, migration is an issue that shows opposite positions between EU member states; that is instrumentalized for political reasons by certain groups; or that can be at the centre of a tense situation between civil society and governments.

Regarding the ECHR decision that Italy does not have the obligation to take in rescue boats, Mr. Schilling said that he is not overly concerned about it because he understands the Court's point of view. According to him, the common European Asylum System – according to which the first member state in contact with migrants is responsible for them – was unfair: it would be the equivalent of holding Arizona responsible for irregular migration in the whole U.S. For example, when the Dublin Agreement was reached, the EU thought that all Mediterranean countries would take care of migration. The reality was different; Greece opened an office for one hour for a week, when Spain was putting in place very robust border controls, for example.

According to Mr. Schilling, Libya is of particular strategic importance for Italy. He compared the three million people who were accepted by Turkey – and who were relatively well treated – to the people who have gone through Libya, most of whom are traumatized because they suffered slavery, torture, abuses, sexual aggressions, etc. For these reasons, Mr. Schilling argued that an EU member state that would return people to Libya would go against its obligations under the European Convention.

Mr. Soda argued that even if Canada selects its immigrants and plays a relatively small role in the international management of migration, its role on the global stage in that regard is still very important, because it counter-balances countries with hard positions towards immigration. He explained that irregular migrants have very limited legal channels to migrate, very few options. Mr. Soda argued that the nearly five million people

who have immigrated legally to Italy is a topic that is hardly discussed: the 500,000 irregular migrants have over-shadowed this reality. According to Mr. Soda, the migration issue shows that there is an identity crisis within the EU member states.

In answer to questions from the delegates on what EU member states would be models to follow in that regard, Mr. Schilling gave the example of Portugal, for the integration of migrants. Mr. Soda added the examples of Norway, the Netherlands and the U.K. He argued that these countries have been working on this issue for a long time, but that their capacity and their know-how are limited; they are very inexperienced in actually dealing with this issue.

Mr. Soda argued that the Mediterranean crossing issue will be more manageable when Libya is more secure and more stable. He reminded the delegation that Italy is the most engaged country in Libya, in the Horn of Africa and in Western Africa. In his view, the management of migration is also about bilateral relations and must be addressed with the major issues of the country in mind, such as tax reform, the slow economic decline that started 15 or 20 years ago and low employment mobility in Italy.

Mr. Soda explained that most of the work done for integrating migrants happens at the municipal level and highlighted the importance of the role of the diaspora in that regard. He identified the need for a greater dialogue in Italy at the same time as he acknowledged that more than 60 different nationalities are immigrating to Italy (70 nationalities were recorded last year). According to Mr. Soda, there is nothing comparable in the world and Italy tends to be working more domestically than with the EU.

According to Mr. Schilling, Canada can help in the discussion about migration by bringing key messages: by explaining what works well with the private sponsorship program, for example. In his view, Canada is seen like a patriarch when it comes to immigration.

Meeting with Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Emigration of the Senate

The delegation met with Mr. Vito Rosario Petrocelli (M5S), President of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Emigration of the Senate, and other members of that committee.

Regarding the issue of migration, Mr. Petrocelli argued that the government's approach is based on the theory of contracts: the problem must be dealt with by working in the countries where migrants come from, such as Libya. Mr. Petrocelli explained that the Italian Parliament's position is that responsibility of migration should be shared by all EU member states. In his view, Italy is no longer willing to shoulder the burden coming from the Dublin Regulations. He argued that the EU should be a place of solidarity, but that solidarity can be achieved only if every EU member state contributes.

Mr. Tony Chike Iwobi (Lega) argued that Italy's current problem has nothing to do with the immigration that it wants, the immigration from which he comes personally. He took a stand against uncontrolled and clandestine immigration and argued that it should not cost more than 50 million Euros for receiving countries and there should not be 14,000 bodies in the Mediterranean Sea as a result of the situation. Mr. Iwobi added that Italy should not be left alone to deal with the problem.

Mr. Alberto Airola (M5S) argued that legal immigrants are integrating with Italians. He insisted on the importance of investing in schools and to provide help to young people, for integration purposes.

Mr. Petrocelli noted that more people are emigrating from Northern cities than from Southern cities in Italy: the movement of people has changed, but they have not stopped. He also noted a large number of Italians moving abroad.

Meeting with Ricardo Merlo, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and founder of the Associative Movement Italians Abroad

The delegation then met with Mr. Ricardo Antonio Merlo (Gruppo Misto – MAIE), Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and founder of the Associative Movement Italians Abroad. Mr. Merlo mentioned that he was born in Argentina and represents South America in the Italian Senate. He is responsible for Italians abroad, generally, and for Canada-Italy relations, in particular.

Mr. Sorbara mentioned that June is Italian Heritage Month in Canada; and that the Canadian government is re-opening a consulate in Milan that has been closed since 2007. Mr. Sorbara also mentioned that finalizing the youth mobility agreement between Italy and Canada would allow Italy to be in line with other EU member states and that it would be important for the Italian community in Canada.

Mr. Merlo discussed the current political situation in Venezuela, arguing that it is an important issue for Italy because there are almost two million Venezuelans of Italian descent. In his view, there is no rule of law in Venezuela at present. He also noted that the official position of the Italian government regarding the situation in Venezuela is to try to find a peaceful resolution and to take no military action. Mr. Merlo expressed the wish that elections would take place soon in Venezuela, which would be supervised by international organizations.

Regarding CETA's implementation, Mr. Sorbara noted that Italy's exports are doing well in Canada. Mr. Merlo argued that there is a problem regarding CETA with the protection of GIs, which is a very important issue for Italian farmers. According to him, if the issue of GIs could be solved, trade between Italy and Canada could improve. Ambassador Bugailiskis explained that the issue has already been resolved: a process allows Italian producers to apply and to add products to the list of GIs protected under CETA. She noted that one product has been added since the beginning of that process, Prosciutto di Campagna. Ambassador Bugailiskis also noted that the 42 GIs protected under CETA cover 96% of Italian exports.

Meeting with Professor Paolo Guerrieri, from La Sapienza University; and Professor Francesco Clementi, from Università degli Studi di Perugia

The delegation had a working dinner with Professor Paolo Guerrieri, from La Sapienza University; and Professor Francesco Clementi, from Università degli Studi di Perugia. Ambassador Bugailiskis introduced Professor Guerrieri as a former Italian Senator and one of the most prominent economic minds in Italy; and Professor Clementi – a constitutional law and federalism expert who just launched a book on Vatican law – as a former advisor to four different Italian prime ministers.

Professor Guerrieri explained that after many years of a two-party dynamic, the centre-right against centre-left paradigm in Italy came to an end at the last election. Under that old paradigm there was a certainty regarding who forms the opposition, but it is no longer the case. He noted that the two parties forming the current coalition government are opposed on many issues and argued that Giuseppe Conte, the prime minister, is now a sort of third party in government, being neither Lega nor M5S. Even if the two parties forming the coalition government are opposed on many issues, Professor Guerrieri argued that it is unlikely that there will be an election any time soon.

Professor Clementi explained that the Italian electoral system is very much a proportional one. He noted that Silvio Berlusconi unsuccessfully tried to change it for a system that would allow for a majority. To illustrate his point, Professor Clementi argued that M5S is a classical proportional party and the Christian Democrats Party, for example, is a classical majority party. In his view, Italians need to decide what electoral system they want first, then choose what actors they want in that system. Professor Clementi argued that in a different system, it is not obvious if M5S would be a left or right party. Regarding Lega, he argued that the party plays a double-role: Italian voters are very skeptical at present; they do not know if their vote is going right or left, if they are voting for the government or for the opposition.

Professor Guerrieri addressed the issue of regions and provinces. He explained that Lega wants to put provinces forward again, because they are the only entities providing services to the population. People used to be in favour of eliminating provinces but are now in favour of keeping them because they wish for a better management of their services (e.g. schools). He also noticed a change of style in Italian politics: politicians are no longer talking to colleagues in Parliament but are rather talking directly to the population. He argued that populists have been saying that problems are not complex, that there are simple solutions: it is the traditional parties that have been presenting problems as complex to serve their own interests.

According to Professor Guerrieri, Canada, the U.S., Australia, France and Germany, among others, thought that trade would be able to fix all of society's problems: it was a major mistake, with an important economic and social cost.

Participation in voting is traditionally very high in Italy (up to 96%); it was around 60% at the last election. He also noted an important difference in the levels of participation in the North and in the South (being lower in the South). In Southern Italy, where youth unemployment is at a rate of 52%, the economy is the most prominent issue. In Northern Italy, immigration is the main issue. Professor Guerrieri argued that North and South are growing increasingly different. Lega is considered a centre-right party, because its economic policy is populist (not right-wing) and its social policy is right-wing.

In Professor Guerrieri's view, economic problems related to growth are all domestic, they have nothing to do with the Euro, or with the EU. According to him, Italy's three main problems are:

1. The state of its infrastructure (Italy is ranked 25 in the EU);
2. Lateness regarding digitization; and
3. Difficulties for family-owned businesses to be compatible with the requirements of globalization.

Professor Guerrieri argued that there is still a consensus domestically in Italy on the way forward, but the Italian government's reputation is very low at the international level. There is 0% economic growth, and even if the numbers of votes have been swapped between M5S and Lega, the sum of the two is still the same, which shows that people are still blaming previous governments for their current problems.

Professor Guerrieri noted that a recent poll shows that 58% of the Italian population is in favour of the Euro, as opposed to 48% one year ago. He also noted that the finance minister is a strong supporter of the Euro and of a balanced budget. Professor Guerrieri argued that the only interest of the Italian government in the G20 happening at the moment is how to avoid sanctions related to Italy's deficit and debt. He reminded the delegation that Italians are currently in charge of foreign policy in the European Commission; the European Bank; the European Parliament; among other strategic positions. Professor Guerrieri pointed out that it will likely be a different story in the new European Commission.

Regarding Italy's relations with Russia and China, Professor Clementi argued that Italy is using the economy as a means to get new allies. In that regard, he argued that if the EU imposes sanctions on Italy related to its deficit and debt, it knows that Italy could change its position on the geopolitical sphere.

Visit to the Rome War Cemetery and Wreath Laying

On the morning of 28 June, the delegation visited the Rome War Cemetery, where several Canadians are buried. Ambassador Bugailiskis and Mr. Sorbara participated in a wreath laying ceremony.

Briefing with Edith St-Hilaire, Senior Trade Commissioner at the Canadian Embassy

The delegation then met with Ms. Edith St-Hilaire, a Senior Trade Commissioner at the Canadian embassy. Ms. Anita Baidwan, Second Secretary and Trade Commissioner at the Canadian embassy, also took part in the meeting.

Ambassador Bugailiskis explained that Ms. St-Hilaire is in charge of implementing CETA in Italy. Ms. St-Hilaire explained that the unemployment rate in Italy is at 11% and that Italy's debt represents 130% of its gross domestic product (GDP). Ms. St-Hilaire also noted that Italy is the 8th economy in importance in the world and the 4th in the EU. It has strong industries: manufacturing in the North (where certain regions are the richest in the whole EU), and agricultural production in the South.

Ms. St-Hilaire noted some similarity between Canada and Italy in terms of percentage of exports compared to the GDP (approximately 35% in both cases). She noted that trade between the two countries represents 12 billion dollars. Ms. St-Hilaire informed the delegation that the Canadian government employs experts in defence and security, as well as in clean technology, for example, that help Canadian companies do business in Italy.

Ms. St-Hilaire pointed out that Confindustria, with whom the delegation was meeting next, represents many companies, several associations, and that it is a voice for changing certain rules and bringing social reform. In her view, Confindustria members have a similar role to trade commissioners: helping Italian companies to invest in Canada. Ms.

St-Hilaire noted that Confindustria organized a road show recently to talk about CETA's advantages.

Meeting with Confindustria's Giovani Imprenditori (Young Entrepreneurs)

The delegation had a working lunch with members of Confindustria's Giovani Imprenditori (Young Entrepreneurs): Mr. Nicola Altobelli, Vice-President; Mr. Gaetano La Rocca; Ms. Sara Cuccù; Ms. Roberta Maldacca; and Ms. Angelica Krystle Donati.

Ambassador Bugailiskis introduced the Giovani Imprenditori as the future of Italy. She noted that some members went to Montreal in January 2019, for the G20 meeting. Ambassador Bugailiskis also highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) for Montreal and for Quebec. She mentioned the creation of "super clusters" and the fact that 9,000 students are now studying AI in Canada, mostly in Montreal. Ambassador Bugailiskis also insisted on the importance of youth mobility and mentioned the existence of non-tariff barriers in that regard.

Mr. Altobelli explained that Giovani Imprenditori was founded more than 50 years ago; it deals with a mix of social and business issues, looking for solutions to global issues. Mr. Altobelli also explained that Giovani Imprenditori tries to reach out to similar organizations in other countries. In Montreal for the G20 meeting, for example, they took part in the first meeting of the "G8 young entrepreneurs," where there was a leadership assembly. He noted that, on that occasion, Canada made commitments that it is ready to make business, but in a sustainable manner, with a longer view. Mr. Altobelli explained that the G20 Young Entrepreneurs program brought together 400 young entrepreneurs from around the world and insisted on the importance of making the voice of young entrepreneurs heard.

Mr. La Rocca explained that he works in his family's construction company, bidding on public and private tenders. The company has approximately 100 employees and 20 million Euros in assets.

Ms. Krystle Donati said that she also works in her family's construction company. She sees Canada as a partner with which she can do sustainable business.

Ms. Cuccù explained that she owns a shoe company, Loriblu, and has links with Toronto and Montreal. Ambassador Bugailiskis noted that CETA reduced tariffs on shoes.

Mr. Altobelli argued that there is another way to do business and insisted on the following recommendations, intended for the Italian government:

1. promote free trade and mobility (by issuing special visas for young entrepreneurs, for example);
2. give access to credit, which is especially important for women starting without any funding (he noted in that regard that a European Central Bank program helped a lot and that it is also a way to solve social issues stemming from globalization); and
3. acknowledge the need for a digital infrastructure to help unleash the power of the digital market for Italian industries and allow them to better compete (he gave the examples of Ghana and other African countries that are investing heavily in their digital infrastructure).

In answer to questions from the delegates on the social integration of new immigrants in Italy, Ms. Krystle Donati mentioned an integration program for newcomers, noting that many workers in the construction industry come from Hungary and Poland.

Mr. Altobelli noted that Italy has the second oldest population in the world (after Japan); and that public education is free and of excellent quality, but that many people leave after their studies. According to him, *Giovani Imprenditori* is on the front-lines of this battle, trying to get fiscal benefits for companies employing people under the age of 35. He argued that the country is currently losing some of its “best energy.” In Mr. Altobelli’s view, Lega found easy solutions to complex issues, by lowering the age of retirement from 67 to 65 years old, for example, but there is a cost to these measures that is imposed on the younger generation. He highlighted the differences between the South and the North of Italy by noting that the GDP of the region of Lombardi, in Northern Italy, is higher than the GDP of the region in Munich, in Germany’s.

Regarding the issue of migration, Mr. Altobelli said that it is difficult for Italians to see migration to Italy as an asset because so many migrants have arrived. In his view, mindsets need to be changed to see opportunities and take advantage of immigration. He also noted that many small and medium enterprises are being acquired by foreign companies, especially those exposed to international trade, which is changing the face of the country. Mr. Altobelli mentioned that there is a mismatch between offer and demand that leads to high unemployment, at the same time as too many job vacancies. He also noted that the cost of labour is very high. Ms. Cuccù added that it is very difficult for young people to find work at present in Italy.

Meeting at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The delegation finished its mission to Italy by meeting representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. In September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), Goal 2 being "Zero Hunger".

Mr. Roberto Ridolfi, Assistant Director-General, Programme Support and Technical Cooperation at the FAO, explained that he wants to bring the SDGs into agricultural development to ensure that investments are made in a sustainable manner. He also expressed the wish to mainstream SDGs in food systems, employment, and gender. Regarding SDGs, Mr. Ridolfi explained that the FAO’s first objective is to facilitate the regulatory environment to help investments. The second objective is to help the private sector deliver sustainable and decent jobs.

Mr. Maximo Torero, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development, and Chief Economist at the FAO, highlighted the issues of gender security and food waste and losses. He explained that the FAO has a policy on gender equality with the following four key objectives to guide its work:

1. Women’s equal participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programs;
2. Women’s equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources;
3. Women’s equal access to goods, services and markets; and

4. Women's work burden reduced by 20% through improved technologies, services and infrastructure.

Mr. Torero mentioned that another important objective for the FAO is to reduce food waste and losses and that they are working on a platform with IFAD and WFP in this regard. He mentioned that they are working on policies to reduce waste, especially in the commercial sector. Mr. Torero mentioned that the FAO is also working on nutrition issues and collaborates with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in that regard.

Ms. Marcela Villarreal, Director of the Partnerships Division at the FAO, argued that the trend regarding the SDGs is very concerning: we are moving away from reaching the objectives. She mentioned that obesity is an important health problem in certain countries and that, at the same time, there is a lack of food in other countries. Ms. Villarreal noted that one-third of food that could be eaten is being thrown out, because of waste and losses. She also noted that 20 laws pertaining to hunger and malnutrition have been passed at the national and sub-national levels. Ms. Villarreal gave the example of the Japanese Parliament, which passed a law against food waste recently. She mentioned that in 2018, in Madrid, the first Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition took place, in which 200 parliamentarians from different countries participated. Among other things, the following 10 recommendations – which are intended for parliamentarians – [resulted](#) from that summit:

1. Legislators should establish the principles that guide policy towards ending hunger and malnutrition;
2. Legislators should establish the rules of the game when it comes to overseeing laws and organizing their implementation;
3. Members of parliament should draft laws that take food and nutritional security into account while also considering the needs of different industries;
4. Parliaments could take advantage of the knowledge held by national and international academic bodies, such as universities and research institutes
5. Parliaments should maintain a dialogue with civil society, businesses, and the executive and legislative branches of government;
6. Parliamentarians could improve the work they do by undergoing specialized training;
7. Parliamentarians should build and strengthen opportunities to share knowledge and experience;
8. Raising awareness and informing the public should be part and parcel of parliamentary work;
9. Legislators should form inclusive alliances; and
10. Towards a shared objective: building a global alliance.

In answer to questions from the delegates pertaining to the FAO's biggest challenge, Mr. Ridolfi argued that it lies in the world's financial system, which is built on profits and returns. In his view, projects need to be transformed into changes to that system. He mentioned another important challenge: asymmetry. It could take two years for Canada to achieve SDG goals, but it could take 20 years for Malawi to do the same, for example.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Scott Simms, M.P.
Chair
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Third Part of the 2019 Session of the PACE and Parliamentary Mission to Italy
DESTINATION	Strasbourg, France and Rome, Italy
DATES	June 24-28, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia Hon. David M. Wells
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Francesco Sorbara Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet David Tilson Salma Zahid
STAFF	Josée Thérien Maxime-Olivier Thibodeau
TRANSPORTATION	\$53,181.96
ACCOMMODATION	\$16,370.91
HOSPITALITY	\$3,512.12
PER DIEMS	\$7,141.45
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$165.75
MISCELLANEOUS	\$760.00
TOTAL	\$81,132.19