

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Meeting of the Standing Committee of
Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Murmansk, Russia
27-28 March 2019**

Report

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Larry Bagnell, Member of Parliament for Yukon, represented the Canadian Parliament at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (the Standing Committee or SCPAR)¹ held in Murmansk, Russia from 27 to 28 March 2019 (see the list of participants in Annex 1). Mr. Larry Bagnell was re-elected Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee in September 2018. Accompanying Mr. Larry Bagnell was Mr. Thai Nguyen, from the Parliamentary Information and Research Service of the Library of Parliament as adviser.

Arctic parliamentary cooperation is facilitated by the Standing Committee between biennial meetings of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR).² CPAR and the Standing Committee act as a parliamentary forum for topics of interest to Arctic Nations and issues relevant to the work of the Arctic Council. The forum comprises delegations from the eight Arctic parliaments (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the United States) and the European Parliament. CPAR and SCPAR also include Permanent Participants representing Indigenous peoples, as well as observers.

SUMMARY OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE'S MEETING

A. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ARCTIC COOPERATION

In their welcome speeches, both Mr. Andrey Chibis, Governor of the Murmansk Region and Mr. Sergey Dobovoy, Speaker of the Murmansk Regional Duma underscored the importance of international Arctic cooperation. They indicated that Murmansk is the gateway to the Russian Arctic, and international Arctic cooperation is critical to responsible development of Arctic resources and supporting infrastructure. Mr. Andrey Chibis and Mr. Sergey Dobovoy also highlighted similar environmental challenges experienced in all Arctic nations in the context of natural resources development.

B. ARCTIC POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Nikolay Korchunov, Ambassador at Large for International Cooperation in the Arctic and Senior Arctic Official at the Arctic Council, described to delegates the main features of the Russian Federation's Arctic Policy. The priority of that Arctic Policy is promoting social and economic development. He indicated that the Arctic region accounts for about 10% of Russia's total GDP and close to 20% of all Russian exports. Mr. Nikolay Korchunov also noted that 2 million people live in the Russian Arctic.

To support social and economic development in the Russian Arctic, Mr. Nikolay Korchunov pointed out the critical role of the Northern Sea Route (NSR). The NSR is

¹ Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, <http://www.arcticparl.org/>.

² The 13th CPAR took place in Inari, Finland in September 2018. The Inari Conference Statement is available at: <http://www.arcticparl.org/conferences.aspx?id=6862>

becoming increasingly viable as the quickest route between Asia and Europe. He mentioned that the Russian Parliament passed new legislation regulating shipping activities in the NSR in 2018. Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom, has been granted operating control over the NSR, while the Ministry of Transport will maintain its earlier administrative role over the route. Rosatom, which operates Russia's nuclear icebreaker fleet, will have full authority over infrastructure, access, security and shipping in the NSR, as Russia seeks to open its Arctic waters for commercial navigation on a year-round basis.

Mr. Nikolay Korchunov emphasized the importance of Arctic cooperation in several areas related to social and economic development: fisheries, search and rescue, science and shipping support infrastructure. Noting that most delegates arrived in Murmansk via the capital, Moscow, he mentioned that Arctic states should also increase cooperation in the development of North-North air transportation corridors. The March 2019 near-shipwreck in northern Norway, involving the *Viking Sky* cruise ship, has laid bare the lack of rescue resources in the Arctic and the critical need for cooperation between Arctic states.

According to Mr. Nikolay Korchunov, Russia has begun to prepare for its Chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2021 to 2023. The focus of the Russian Chairmanship will be placed on social and economic development of the Arctic and opportunities for cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region. Mr. Nikolay Korchunov ended his presentation by mentioning that the Presidents of Russia, Iceland, and Finland, and the Prime Ministers of Norway and Sweden will be attending the International Arctic Forum in St. Petersburg in April 2019. The Forum is a platform for discussing issues relating to the socio-economic development of the Arctic and for developing multilateral mechanisms for partnerships in natural resource development.

Mr. Larry Bagnell indicated to the committee that the Canadian Senior Arctic Official will lead a delegation to the International Arctic Forum. The Canadian delegation will also attend the "Canada and Russia: the Arctic Giants" event organized by the St. Petersburg State University. In addition, Polar Knowledge Canada hosted a young Russian Arctic scientist at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, in 2018.

On the initiative of Mr. Larry Bagnell and the member from Denmark/Greenland, committee members exchanged information regarding climate change effects on Arctic fisheries, including changes in species distribution. The member from the Icelandic Parliament also raised the issue of green marine transportation. Mr. Nikolay Korchunov indicated that the increased use of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a marine fuel represents an opportunity for greener maritime transport in Russia.

C. DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ARCTIC

Mr. Vladimir Arutiunyan, Head of the Operational Department of the Fleet – Chief of the Marine Operations Headquarters, Federal State Unitary Enterprise "Atomflot", explained to committee members Atomflot's icebreaking responsibility in the development of transport infrastructure in the Russian Arctic. Atomflot is part of the Rosatom group, based in Murmansk, and maintains the world's only fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers.

Atomflot maintains a fleet of Artika class icebreakers capable of breaking through ice that is 4 to 5 metres thick. Shipping activities in the NSR is currently estimated at 10 million tonnes of cargo and Russia has a target of increasing that traffic to 40 million tonnes in the next 5 years. The expected increase in shipping activities is related to the development of LNG projects in the Yamal Peninsula. The Yamal LNG fleet includes 15 tankers escorted through the NSR by nuclear icebreakers.

In response to the need to develop transport infrastructure in the NSR, Mr. Vladimir Arutiunyan informed the committee about Russia's plan to launch a new fleet of nuclear icebreakers to replace decommissioned vessels. The new *Arktika* is expected to be commissioned in 2019, followed by the new *Sibir* in 2021. Russia will also develop, in cooperation with Finland, a fleet of LNG-propelled icebreakers.

In response to Mr. Larry Bagnell's question regarding the emphasis of Russia on the development of nuclear icebreakers, Mr. Vladimir Arutiunyan mentioned that, in addition to their capability in thick ice conditions, nuclear icebreakers do not emit greenhouse gases.

D. COOPERATION IN THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC REGION

Ms. Elena Tikhonova, Minister for Economic Development of the Murmansk Region, told committee members that Murmansk's economy is not dependent on one single sector. Shipping, mining, fishing and tourism are all contributing to the growth of the Murmansk region. She pointed out that the tourism sector has witnessed a boom in recent years with the annual arrival of 400,000 Asian tourists in search of an Arctic experience. Most of the tourists from Asia are Chinese, but Murmansk also attracts visitors from Malaysia, Viet Nam, Singapore, and the Philippines.

The Barents-Euro Arctic region was provided as a good example of cross-border Arctic cooperation. During the Cold War, the Barents region was an area of tensions. However, the launch in 1993 of the intergovernmental Barents Euro-Arctic Council and interregional Barents Region Council have succeeded in fostering cooperation between member states and regions.

Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, Chair of the Standing Committee and member of the Norwegian Parliament, added that 2019 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Norway's northernmost region from Nazi occupation by the Red Army. The anniversary will be attended by high-level officials from Norway and Russia. He stressed that the anniversary is a strong reminder of people-to-people cooperation between the two Arctic nations in the context of current geopolitical tensions outside of the Arctic region.

E. LETTER TO THE INCOMING ICELANDIC ARCTIC COUNCIL CHAIRMANSHIP

Committee members unanimously amended and adopted a draft letter to be presented to the incoming Icelandic Arctic Council Chairmanship. In that letter, the committee emphasizes that "continued cooperation among the Arctic countries is paramount to effectively respond to challenges faced by all countries in the region; including on environmental issues, not only to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, but also to create favourable conditions for sustainable economic development."

The committee also encouraged the Icelandic chairmanship to implement recommendations made by CPAR in its Conference Statement adopted in Inari, Finland in 2018.

F. NATIONAL REPORTS

1. Canada

Mr. Larry Bagnell introduced a video clip on the Arctic Winter Games to be held in Whitehorse, Yukon in 2020. The Games include circumpolar delegations from Alaska, Greenland, the Canadian Arctic, Sapmi (region traditionally inhabited by the Sami people in northern Europe), and Yamal (Russia).

Mr. Larry Bagnell also presented the Canadian report on Arctic activities since the last SCPAR meeting in Inari, in September 2018.

• Creation of the First Arctic Council-Related Permanent Secretariat in Canada

On 19 March 2019, the federal government announced, in its 2019 budget, the creation of the first Arctic Council-related permanent secretariat in Canada. This initiative strengthens Canada's engagement in the Arctic Council by establishing a permanent secretariat for the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. The Secretariat is expected to increase the participation of Canada's Arctic residents in Arctic Council and Arctic research activities, and providing Arctic youth with international learning opportunities.

• Introduction of Indigenous Languages Legislation

On 5 February 2019, the federal government introduced Bill C-91, the Indigenous Languages Act, to "reclaim, revitalize, strengthen and maintain Indigenous languages in Canada." The bill has been developed to support the implementation of recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, elements of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the federal government's commitment to a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples.

It should be noted that:

- 2019 was declared the International Year of Indigenous Languages by UNESCO; and
- In 2016, only 15% of Indigenous people in Canada could converse in an Indigenous language, compared to 17% in 2011 and 21% in 2006. However, the situation in the Arctic is much better as 64% of Canadian Inuit can converse in Inuktitut.

2. Denmark/Greenland

The delegate from the Danish Parliament representing Greenland informed members that the International Maritime Organization will soon release its recommendations regarding

the issue of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) in the Arctic. In her view, assessing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of a potential HFO ban is critical.

3. Finland

The delegate from Finland's Parliament informed members that Finland will chair the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2019. As incoming chair of the Council of the European Union and outgoing chair of the Arctic Council, Finland will put Arctic issues on the agenda of the European Union. Finland will also focus on the topic of marine litter.

4. Iceland

The Icelandic member told the committee that Iceland is well prepared for its incoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The priorities for the Icelandic chairmanship include plastic pollution in the marine environment, development of the blue economy, green energy solutions for small communities, and stronger linkages between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council.

The Icelandic Parliament has started the ratification process of the *International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*, signed in 2018 by Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Russia, the United States, the European Union, China, Japan, and South Korea.

The Icelandic member also expressed disappointment regarding the low level of parliamentary engagement from the United States Congress and the European Parliament in recent years on Arctic issues.

5. Norway

The Chair of SCPAR and member of the Norwegian Parliament expressed concerns about the insufficient search and rescue (SAR) resources in the Arctic, considering the *Viking Sky* cruise ship incident in Norwegian waters in March 2019. The Arctic Council's *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic* establishes the area of SAR responsibility of each state party. In his view, areas of SAR responsibility are too vast for any state to rely on its own resources and enhanced circumpolar cooperation is a priority.

The Norwegian member also mentioned "worrying" signals coming from the United States ahead of the Arctic Council's Ministerial Meeting in May 2019. In his opinion, negotiations in the drafting process of the *Rovaniemi Declaration*, to be adopted by the Arctic Council, are difficult. Mr. Eirik Sivertsen pointed out that climate change actions are at the foundation of the Arctic Council's mandate. He encouraged his colleagues to raise awareness about climate change and Arctic issues with their American contacts.

Mr. Larry Bagnell suggested to members to remind their American colleagues that climate change affects the entire world. However, he remains optimistic as the United States is still engaged in the negotiations at the Arctic Council.

6. Sweden

The Swedish member indicated that a new government has finally been formed in January 2019 following Sweden's elections in September 2018. Sweden intends to update its Arctic Strategy in the coming months.

VISIT OF THE MURMANSK COMMERCIAL SEA PORT AND THE LENIN ICEBREAKER

On 28 March 2019, Committee members had the opportunity to visit the Murmansk Commercial Sea Port. According to its Director, the port's handling of Arctic cargo will grow by 15% to 400,000 tonnes in 2019. The main cargo serviced at the port is coal. The port also handles cargo to other Russian Arctic ports (Sabetta, Dikson, Khatanga), loading and unloading of nuclear-powered icebreaking vessels and container ships, as well as supply vessels for oil and gas offshore projects.

The committee also visited the *Lenin*, Russia's and the world's first nuclear icebreaker. The ship was in service from 1959 to 1989. It has now been converted to a museum ship permanently based in Murmansk.

FUTURE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the Standing Committee is scheduled in May 2019 in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Annex 1



CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

MEETING IN MURMANSK, RUSSIA

27-28 March 2019

MEMBERS

Canada	Mr. Larry Bagnell, MP, Vice-Chair of the SCPAR Mr. Thai Nguyen, Adviser
Denmark/Greenland	Ms. Aaja Chemnitz Larsen, MP Mr. Peder Pedersen, Adviser
Finland	Mr. Kari Kulmala, MP
Iceland	Mr. Ari Trausti Gudmundsson, MP Ms. Arna Bang, Adviser
Norway	Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, MP Mr. Bjorn-Willy Robstad, Adviser
Russia	Mr. Igor Chernyshenko, Senator Mr. Alexander Kurdiumov, MP Mr. Sergei Kotkin, MP Mr. Sergei Goncharov, Adviser Mr. Kirill Mangush, Adviser Ms. Irina Kuzmina, Adviser
Sweden	Mr. Jan Mattias Karlsson, MP Ms. Eva Hjelm, Adviser

OBSERVERS

West Nordic Council	Mr. Gudjon Brjansson, MP Mr. Sigurdur Olafsson, Secretary-General
---------------------	--

SECRETARIAT

Mr. Samu Paukkunen, Secretary-General and
Adviser for Finland

GUEST SPEAKERS

Mr. Nikolay Korchunov, Ambassador at Large for International Cooperation in the Arctic,
Senior Arctic Official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia

Mr. Vladimir Arutiunyan, Head of the Operational Department of the Fleet – Chief of the
Marine Operations Headquarters, Federal State Unitary Enterprise “Atomflot”

Ms. Elena Tikhonova, Minister for Economic Development of the Murmansk Region

Mr. Andrey Chibis, Governor of the Murmansk Region

Mr. Sergey Dubovoy, MP, Speaker of the Murmansk Regional Duma

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic
DESTINATION	Murmansk, Russia
DATES	March 27-28, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Larry Bagnell, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Thai Nguyen, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$20,019.23
ACCOMMODATION	\$339.48
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$497.54
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$23.49
TOTAL	\$20,879.74