

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

Strasbourg, France

February 12 to 13, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Larry Bagnell, Member of Parliament for Yukon, and Mr. Larry Maguire, Member of Parliament for Brandon—Souris, represented the Canadian Parliament at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (the Standing Committee or SCPAR)¹ held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France on 12 and 13 February 2020 (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 and Mr. Larry Maguire 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 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 Arctic Indigenous peoples, as well as observers.

SUMMARY OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE'S MEETING

A. REMARKS FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Marcel Kolaja noted that the Arctic, as ground zero for climate change, is becoming increasingly of interest to the European Union. He stressed that the European Parliament fully supports the *International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*.³ In Mr. Kolaja's view, the agreement reflects the continuing success of Arctic cooperation and the importance of preserving the region as a zone of peace and cooperation.

Mr. Marcel Kojala indicated that the European Parliament has been encouraging a greater involvement of the European Union in Arctic affairs. He also emphasized the role of interparliamentary cooperation in shaping national discussions on the Arctic and informing domestic debates on Arctic realities.

B. EUROPEAN UNION POLICY FOR THE ARCTIC

Mr. Terkel Petersen, Senior Expert for Arctic Matters, European External Action Service (EEAS), summarized the 2016 European Union Policy for the Arctic.⁴ He observed that, to date, the European Union has still not dedicated resources to fully implement that policy.

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>

³ Fisheries and Oceans Canada, [*International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*](#).

⁴ European Commission, [*An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic*](#), 27 April 2016.

The European Union Policy for the Arctic focuses on climate change, sustainable development, and international cooperation. Mr. Terkel Petersen informed delegates that the European Union is working on an updated policy for the Arctic in the context of similar efforts in Canada, Finland, Iceland, Russia and Sweden. While noting that the Arctic Council remains the primary forum for Arctic intergovernmental cooperation, he expressed doubts regarding current Arctic and non-Arctic forums' capacity to deal with globalized issues, such as demographic trends and Indigenous rights.

Mr. Jari Vilen, Senior Adviser for Arctic Policy at the European Commission, provided the example of Russia's investment in its icebreaking fleet as a concrete step in implementing its Arctic policy which emphasizes economic development.⁵ In his opinion, updating the 2016 European Union policy is not enough and the European Union needs a comprehensive strategy with a long-term vision until 2030 and beyond. Mr. Jari Vilen also observed that the European Union will need to properly fund activities promoted in its strategy. In the absence of such funding, he ventured that funding for Arctic infrastructure development, for example, will come from China.

In response to Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, Chair of SCPAR's question regarding the capacity of existing Arctic cooperation forums to tackle hard (military) security discussions, Mr. Jari Vilen noted that the Arctic Council is not the best place for them because of the Council's focus on cooperation. In his view, a new forum may be required for hard security issues. However, he stressed that, for the economic potential of the Arctic to be fully realized, the region needs to remain a zone of peace.

Mr. Larry Bagnell indicated that the impacts of climate change policies on Arctic residents need to be considered to avoid putting the burden of mitigation efforts on people who contributed little to the origins of this global problem. He mentioned that Canada's recently released Arctic and Northern Policy Framework was co-developed with Canadian Arctic residents and reflects their priorities.⁶ Mr. Larry Bagnell also noted, as Inuit people today depend on seals for food security and income, Canadian Arctic Indigenous governing bodies have recommended the European Union to raise awareness about how its ban on seal products includes an exemption for Inuit communities, and to work with them to improve the certification requirement process.⁷

Echoing remarks from Mr. Jari Vilen regarding Russian investments in the Arctic, Senator Alexander Akimov informed delegates that those investments are part of Russia's efforts to develop its Northern Sea Route and implement the socio-economic focus of its Arctic policy.⁸ He emphasized the critical role of the Arctic in the Russian Federation's long-term economic development strategy. Senator Alexander Akimov added that the biggest hurdle in achieving Russia's strategic goals is infrastructure building. In the context of

⁵ Nilsen T, "[In a last move as PM, Medvedev secured funding to first Russian Lider-class icebreaker](#)," *Eye on the Arctic*, 17 January 2020.

⁶ Government of Canada, [Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework](#).

⁷ European Commission, [Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: On the implementation of Regulation \(EC\) No 1007/2009, as amended by Regulation \(EU\) 2015/1775, on the Trade in Seal Products](#), 10 January 2020. See also: Dustin Patar, "[Inuit exemption to European Union's seal product ban is ineffective: report](#)," *Nunatsiaq News*, 27 January 2020.

⁸ "[Ministry for Development of Russian Far East completed work on a draft Arctic development strategy](#)," *The IX International Forum Arctic: Today and the Future*, 5-7 December 2019, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Western sanctions, he mentioned that Russia has been enhancing its Arctic economic cooperation with China, Japan and India.⁹

C. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARCTIC

Mr. David McAllister, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, promoted an enhanced engagement of the European Union in Arctic affairs. He indicated that the visibility of Arctic geopolitical issues has risen in the European Parliament and reminded delegates that the 2016 European Union Policy for the Arctic resulted from a 2014 European Parliament resolution calling for a strategy and action plan on the Arctic.

During the debate following Mr. David McAllister remarks, the Chair of SCPAR mentioned that, currently, there are no geopolitical issues inside the Arctic region. Stressing the rights of Arctic states, the Chair also questioned the potential role of the European Union in the Arctic. Given the low digital connectivity in many parts of the Arctic, Mr. Ari Trausti Gudmundsson from the Icelandic Parliament suggested that the European Union could provide an added value to Arctic cooperation by sharing its expertise in space technologies.

D. MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN ARCTIC

Mr. Aaretti Siitonen from the EEAS provided the case of the Northern Dimension as an example of the importance of multilateral and regional cooperation in the European Arctic. The Northern Dimension is a joint policy of the European Union, Russia, Norway and Iceland.¹⁰ It aims to support the sustainable development of the region by means of practical cooperation. Mr. Aaretti Siitonen mentioned the St. Petersburg wastewater treatment plants rehabilitation project as a typical example of cooperation between the European Union and Russia. He also indicated that the next focus of the Northern Dimension would be on climate change and transport connectivity cooperation.

Mr. Larry Maguire pointed out that, in the past, Canada has contributed substantial sums of money via the Global Partnership Program towards nuclear safety cooperation projects of the Northern Dimension. In fact, the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership's website shows Canada's contribution to be 20 million euros.¹¹

E. ICELANDIC CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Mr. Einar Gunnarsson, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials of the Arctic Council presented an update on the Icelandic chairmanship's activities. He indicated that Iceland's priority as Chair of the Arctic Council from 2019 to 2021 is the Blue economy and climate change.¹² As Russia will chair the Council from 2021 to 2023, Iceland has been coordinating the Council's activities with Russia. Iceland also considers the role of non-Arctic observers at the Council to be positive.

⁹ Devyatkin P, "[Russia and India set to Deepen Trade and Investment in Arctic Energy](#)," *High North News*, 4 September 2019.

¹⁰ Northern Dimension, [The Northern Dimension \(ND\)](#).

¹¹ Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, [Contributors](#).

¹² Arctic Council, [Icelandic Chairmanship](#).

Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, Chair of SCPAR agreed that non-Arctic states bring a positive contribution to the Arctic Council's work. However, as SCPAR is also an observer at the Council, he stressed the special importance of SCPAR as the voice of Arctic parliamentarians among the growing body of non-Arctic observer states.

F. WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

Mr. Lars Kullerud, President of the University of the Arctic informed delegates that the University of the Arctic has now established its permanent secretariat at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland. He indicated that there are opportunities for a stronger engagement of the European Union in the Arctic in the education sector. Given the upcoming Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Mr. Lars Kullerud also mentioned that an enhanced presence of the University of the Arctic in Russia would be among its priorities.

G. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 14TH CONFERENCE IN NORWAY

The Chair of SCPAR confirmed that the 14th CPAR will be held in Tromsø, Norway from 1 to 3 September 2020. He noted that CPAR will take place about two months before the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held from 9 to 19 November 2020, in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Therefore, the Chair proposed the following three themes for the 14th CPAR:

1. Arctic nations' efforts in implementing the Paris Agreement;
2. Sustainable development in the Arctic in the context of rapid environmental and socio-economic changes; and
3. Fifth International Polar Year (IPY) with an emphasis on social sciences and linked to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹³

Mr. Larry Bagnell suggested the upcoming Conference Statement to be more focused with a reduced number of recommendations compared to previous versions. The Chair agreed and reminded committee members that they are responsible for conveying the Conference Statement to their respective parliaments as well as following up with their national governments on the response to recommendations.

Regarding the drafting of the Conference Statement, the Chair of SCPAR indicated the first draft will be produced by the Secretariat and sent to members for review. Proposed recommendations from delegations will be included in the second draft. This second draft will be reviewed by SCPAR during its next meeting.

H. ARCTIC SECURITY

Given that hard security issues are not part of the Arctic Council's mandate, Mr. Larry Maguire enquired about the possibility of holding such discussions either at CPAR or another forum. In the Chair's view, however, it is not fruitful to bring hard security topics into existing Arctic cooperation forums as doing so may push all other critical issues off

¹³ United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Agenda](#).

the table. The Chair indicated that a new forum on Arctic security may need to be created; such a forum should involve the participation of all Arctic states.

The Chair also mentioned that the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen Institute will organize a one-day discussions on Arctic security on 31 August 2020. The discussions will be driven by academics from all Arctic nations analyzing national narratives about Arctic security. The Chair stressed that Arctic security should be viewed from a broad angle and focused on Arctic residents needs and priorities. Therefore, in addition to hard security, discussions will include topics such as environmental security, food security, search and rescue, and cultural security. The Fridtjof Nansen Institute's security forum will be open to parliamentarians by invitation only and Arctic parliamentarians, especially SCPAR members, will be given priority.

I. CANADIAN REPORT

Mr. Larry Bagnell presented the Canadian report on Arctic activities since the last SCPAR meeting attended by the Canadian delegation in Ottawa, in May 2019.

• Sharing Best Practices in the Field of Mental Health

Mr. Larry Bagnell reminded members about the recommendation on sharing data and best practices in the field of mental health, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs). He was encouraged to see a response to that 13th CPAR recommendation by the way of the 2020 "Alcohol, pregnancy and infant health – a shared responsibility" report initiated by a group of Nordic organizations.¹⁴ He also suggested that FASD may be a potential topic for the upcoming Conference.

• Northern Food Strategy

Mr. Larry Bagnell also informed the committee on a 2019 federal investment of \$15 million to bolster food security in the Canadian North. The investment will help communities to lead projects that will strengthen local Indigenous food systems and increase production and access to local food. The goal is to reduce dependence on the southern food industry and to reduce costs.

FUTURE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the Standing Committee is scheduled for June 2020 in Washington, D.C., United States. According to Senator Lisa Murkowski, the United States Congress will attempt to coincide the SCPAR meeting with Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) to be held from 9 to 11 June.

Respectfully submitted,

¹⁴ Andreasson S et al., "[Alcohol and Society 2020: Alcohol, pregnancy and infant health – a shared responsibility](#)," Swedish Society of Nursing, SFAM, SAFF, CERA and IOGT-NTO, Stockholm, 2020.

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 STRASBOURG, FRANCE

12-13 February 2020

MEMBERS

Canada	Mr. Larry Bagnell, MP, Vice-Chair of SCPAR Mr. Larry Maguire, MP Mr. Thai Nguyen, Adviser
Denmark / Greenland and Faroe Islands	Mr. Sjúrdur Skaale, MP Ms. Joan Ólavsdóttir, Adviser
European Parliament	Mr. Andreas Schwab, MEP Ms. Aušra Rakštelytė, Adviser
Finland	Mr. Mikko Kärnä, MP
Iceland	Mr. Ari Trausti Gudmundsson, MP Ms. Arna Bang, Adviser
Norway	Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, MP, Chair of SCPAR Mr. Bjørn Willy Robstad, Adviser
Russia	Mr. Alexander Akimov, Senator Mr. Yuri Vazhenin, Senator Mr. Georgii Karlov MP Mr. Kirill Mangush, Adviser
Sweden	Ms. Emilia Töyrä, MP Ms. Eva Hjelm, Adviser

United States

Ms. Lisa Murkowski, Senator (by
teleconference)

PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

Sámi Parliamentary Council Mr. Ronny Wilhelmsen

OBSERVERS

Nordic Council

Mr. Christian Juhl, MP
Mr. Johan Tiedemann, Head of Office
Mr. Nikolaj Bock, Adviser on European Union
Affairs

West Nordic Council

Mr. Guðjon S. Brjánsson, MP, Chair
Mr. Sigurður Ólafsson, Secretary General

SECRETARIAT

Mr. Samu Paukkunen, Secretary General and Adviser for Finland

GUEST SPEAKERS

Mr. Marcel Kolaja, Vice-President of the European Parliament, replacing the President for Baltic / Nordic / Arctic issues

Mr. Toma Galli, Croatian Ambassador to the Council of Europe

Mr. Einar Gunnarsson, Arctic Council Chairmanship, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Iceland

Mr. Lars Kullerud, President, University of the Arctic

Mr. David McAllister, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs

Mr. Jari Vilén, Ambassador, Senior Adviser in Arctic Policy Matters, European Commission

Mr. Raphael Goulet, Head of Unit, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE)

Mr. Ruben Alexander Schuster, Cabinet of Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Mr. Terkel Petersen, Senior Expert for Arctic Matters, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Mr. Aaretti Siitonen, Political Officer, Northern Dimension and the Arctic, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Mr. Per S. Nestande, Parliament of Norway

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region
DESTINATION	Strasbourg, France
DATES	February 12 to 13, 2020
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Larry Bagnell Mr. Larry Maguire
STAFF	Mr. Thai Nguyen, Adviser
TRANSPORTATION	\$25,784.70
ACCOMMODATION	\$2,174.82
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$1,578.76
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$29,538.28