

Canadian NATO  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
canadienne de l'OTAN

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## **Report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association**

**Bureau Meeting and Joint Meetings of the Defence and  
Security Committee, the Economics and Security Committee  
and the Political Committee**

**Brussels, Belgium**

**From February 19 to 22, 2023**

## Report

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to report on its participation in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's (NATO PA) Bureau meeting and in the NATO PA's annual Joint Meetings of the Defence and Security, Economics and Security, and Political Committees, held in Brussels, Belgium from 19–22 February 2023<sup>1</sup>.

The objective of the annual Joint Meetings is to provide delegates with an update on the activities and operations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO or the Alliance) as well as to provide a forum to discuss key issues that the organization will face throughout the year. Members of the Committee on Democracy and Security and the Science and Technology Committee also attend the Joint Meetings.

The Canadian delegation comprised: Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament (MP), Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and Head of Delegation; the Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, Senator; the Honourable Clément Gignac, Senator; the Honourable Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator; Rachel Blaney, MP; Cheryl Gallant, MP; the Honourable Steven MacKinnon, PC, MP; and Christine Normandin, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Céline Ethier, Association Secretary, and James Lee, Association Advisor.

### MEETING OF THE NATO PA BUREAU

Ms. Dzerowicz participated in the meeting of the NATO PA Bureau in her capacity as NATO PA Vice-President (ex-officio) on 19 February 2023. Agenda items included a review of the Assembly's partnerships, debate of draft declarations to be proposed to the Standing Committee at the Spring Session in Luxembourg, updates on the President's activities, and discussion of the Assembly's finances.

### JOINT MEETINGS

The Joint Meetings brought together some 120 legislators from 28 NATO member countries. The meetings began with a minute of silence to remember the victims of the devastating earthquake that had struck Türkiye just weeks before, the deadliest natural disaster on Alliance territory since the founding of NATO in 1949.

The Joint Meetings were held a year to the day after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the agenda focussed heavily on the impact of the war on international security and stability. Parliamentarians and officials reiterated the Allies' steadfast commitment to supporting Ukraine and holding Russia accountable for its actions.

Discussions were held under Chatham House Rule.

### Summary of Discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, [Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association meets with NATO and European Union officials, and members of the North Atlantic Council](#), Press Release, 24 February 2023.

As part of these Joint Meetings, delegates attended nine thematic sessions where they heard from senior civil servants and senior military personnel from NATO headquarters, senior officials for the European Union (EU), and various Permanent Representatives to NATO. The topics of these meetings were:

- Russia’s illegal war against Ukraine;
- NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept;
- NATO’s Integrated Air and Missile Defence;
- Foreign information manipulation and interference;
- China’s assertiveness and the Indo-Pacific region;
- the EU’s climate and energy policies;
- NATO’s response to new security challenges;
- NATO’s military adaptation to the new strategic environment; and
- NATO’s nuclear policy.

In today’s new security environment, NATO members and partners face global and interconnected threats. The topics listed above were not addressed in isolation and, in their discussions, delegates returned frequently to key, cross-cutting themes. In considering the war in Ukraine, for example, they also debated such issues as military adaptation and information manipulation, among others. Broadly speaking, three overarching themes emerged: the Alliance’s response to the war in Ukraine, the Alliance’s response to new and emerging challenges, and China’s assertiveness. The following sections summarize the discussions as they relate to these themes.

### **NATO’s response to the war against Ukraine**

Delegates were reminded that the June 2022 Madrid Summit Declaration characterizes Russia as “the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.”<sup>2</sup>

In response to this global threat, delegates heard NATO has entered a period of profound adaption. In the specific context of the war against Ukraine, discussion on this point focused on NATO’s decision to adapt its deterrence and defence posture, including by strengthening its military presence on its Eastern Flank; its focus on developing new approaches in areas such as force generation and readiness; and, lessons learned as regards the importance of integrated air and missile defence.

Regarding assistance to Ukraine, officials highlighted that training provided to Ukraine by Canada and NATO allies and partners since 2014 had strengthened Ukraine’s ability to defend itself. In terms of military support, officials underscored that, collectively, NATO has strengthened its non-lethal support to Ukraine since the war began. Noting that, individually, allies have also contributed support – including lethal support – through the United States (U.S.)-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, it was emphasized that such assistance is carefully “calibrated” to minimize the risk of escalation.

While reiterating that NATO’s support for Ukraine was unwavering, officials noted that maintaining a supply of munitions and other resources presented challenges. Looking

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<sup>2</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [Madrid Summit Declaration](#), Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Madrid 29 June 2022.

forward, Allies were encouraged to improve their defence industrial capacity to ensure continued assistance for Ukraine and to support NATO's ongoing transformation of its defence and deterrence posture. The importance of addressing other issues, including defence spending, defence production and burden sharing, was also highlighted.

Concerns were also raised about Russia's use of "irresponsible" nuclear rhetoric in the context of the war in Ukraine. Delegates were reminded that NATO's approach to nuclear weapons remains based on their deterrent value. It was further noted that while three NATO members – the U.S., France and the United Kingdom – have their own strategic nuclear weapon programs, responsibility for nuclear deterrence is shared among all Allies. Examples of how other Allies contribute to nuclear deterrence include knowledge sharing and the provision of dual-capable aircraft that could deliver U.S. nuclear weapons if required.

### **NATO's response to new and emerging challenges**

Delegates heard that, in addition to "traditional" defence and security challenges, NATO also faces what are often termed "new and emerging" challenges. Such challenges, which include disinformation and the malicious use of new and emerging technologies, threaten the Alliance's shared interests and democratic values.

Particular attention was paid to Russian disinformation efforts, which were characterized as promoting conspiracy theories and attempting to damage the Alliance's unity. Delegates learned that, to counter such efforts, Allies are becoming more proactive in the release of classified and other information. For example, it was explained that when Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014, months passed before satellite photos bearing witness to Russia's actions were declassified. By contrast, in the months before Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. and other states declassified and released intelligence proving that Russia was preparing to invade, which facilitated a fast response when the war began. More generally, it was argued, NATO has moved from reactively debunking Russian claims to proactively releasing information to clarify NATO policies and actions, thereby "pre-bunking" any claims likely to be made by Russia.

Also, on the topic of Russian disinformation, officials shared information about steps NATO has taken to rebut Russian attempts to spread disinformation about NATO's nuclear programs. Among other measures, delegates heard, NATO has taken steps to promote transparency by publicly announcing its routine exercises months in advance. The Alliance is also working to better understand public perception in this area.

Other proposed solutions for countering disinformation included sharing best practices, developing broad policies, and taking a whole-of-society approach. Delegates were informed that NATO is collaborating closely with partners, including the EU, to respond to the challenge disinformation poses. On this point, it was noted that while the EU recognizes the importance of countering foreign information manipulation and interference, individual member states do not always assess or prioritize the challenge in the same way, complicating efforts to address it.

Another new security challenge – the malicious use of emerging and disruptive technologies – also received attention. Emerging and disruptive technologies allow NATO Allies to retain interoperability and military edge; however, in the hands of malicious

operators, they carry risk. Delegates were told that, when it comes to maintaining a competitive edge, with many technological developments coming from Western countries, NATO does not have an “innovation” problem so much as an “adoption” problem. Going forward, NATO will seek to address this problem in part through greater cooperation with the private sector. The Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), the North American regional office of which will be in Halifax, was highlighted as a potential forum for such cooperation.

### **China’s Assertiveness and the Indo-Pacific Region**

Delegates heard that, in recent years, NATO has had to respond to an increasingly assertive China. Presenters reflected on the fact that, as part of this process, NATO has spent considerable time increasing its understanding of China and the ways in which its actions impact the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Although NATO remains a regional organization, it was underscored that events and actions that occur in the Indo-Pacific Region are still of importance to the Alliance.

While noting that the Allies do not all view China in the same way, it was nonetheless emphasized that NATO as an organization does not perceive China as a military threat. That said, NATO is taking measures to adapt to China’s increasing assertiveness. For example, it was pointed out that there has been by increasing cooperation with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region, notably Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

Among other challenges posed by China to allied security, delegates discussed that country’s strong support for Russia. Delegates were reminded that, although China has supported Russia, there was no evidence of it sending weapons to that country and Allied leaders have warned China that it should not do so. Concern about the risk of closer Russia-China cooperation nonetheless persists.

### **Other Issues**

Delegates also discussed the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to challenges related to climate and energy. States must, it was argued, act decisively to limit the global temperature rise, while at the same time ensuring that the transition to cleaner technologies is “just.” By ensuring that no citizen is left behind, it was contended, institutions can help to rebuild popular trust in politics and governments.

### **OTHER MEETINGS**

Before the Joint Meetings, Canadian delegates met with Canada’s Permanent Representative to NATO, Ambassador David Angell, as well as Canada’s Deputy Military Representative to NATO, Colonel Richard Pamplin. During the Joint Meetings, delegates met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and national Permanent

Representatives to the North Atlantic Council. Delegates were also briefed by the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as senior NATO and European Union officials.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The 2023 Joint Meetings of the Defence and Security, Economics and Security and Political Committees allowed Canadian delegates to hold in-depth discussions with senior NATO and other officials, as well as with NATO parliamentarians, on defence, economic and political issues of concern to the Alliance. By doing so they learned about key issues on the Alliance's agenda, while at the same time contributing to the debate and advancing Canadian interests on issues such as the war against Ukraine and the transformation of NATO.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Dzerowicz, MP  
Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Bureau Meeting and Joint Meetings of the Defence and Security Committee, the Economics and Security Committee and the Political Committee
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Brussels, Belgium
<b>DATES</b>	From February 19 to 22, 2023
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu Hon. Clément Gignac Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Rachel Blaney Julie Dzerowicz

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<sup>3</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, [A year after Russia's invasion, Allied parliamentarians discuss unwavering support to Ukraine. NATO's adaptation ahead of Vilnius Summit](#), 23 February 2023.

Cheryl Gallant  
Hon. Steven MacKinnon  
Christine Normandin

STAFF

Céline Ethier  
James Lee

<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 63,261.35
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 12,797.74
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 6,575.25
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$ 70.60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 82,704.94</b>