

Canada – Europe  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
Canada – Europe

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## **Report of the Canada Europe Parliamentary Association**

### **Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region**

**Egilsstaðir, Iceland**

**From October 16 to 17, 2023**

# Report

## INTRODUCTION

Ms. Yvonne Jones, Member of Parliament for Labrador and Mr. Bob Zimmer, Member of Parliament for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, represented the Canadian Parliament at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR or Arctic Parliamentarians)<sup>1</sup> held in Egilsstaðir, Iceland on 16 and 17 October 2023 (see the list of participants in Annex 1). Accompanying the Canadian delegates was Mrs. Daniele Lafrance, from the Research and Education Service of the Library of Parliament as an adviser.

Arctic parliamentary cooperation is facilitated by SCPAR meetings that occur between biennial meetings of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR). CPAR and SCPAR 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, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United States) and the European Parliament. However, no delegates from the Russian Federation were invited to participate in this meeting. CPAR and SCPAR also include permanent participants representing Arctic Indigenous peoples, as well as observers.

## SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

### OPENING REMARKS AND UPDATE BY CHAIR AAJA CHEMNITZ

In her opening remarks, Chair Aaja Chemnitz (Greenland/Denmark) noted that the level of engagement of SCPAR's delegates determines the role of the Standing Committee. She explained that since Arctic organizations are small, collaboration between these organizations is important and increasing collaboration with other Arctic organizations and parliamentarians should remain a priority.

Chair Aaja Chemnitz announced that the Folketing (the Parliament of Denmark) has provided funding for the SCPAR Secretariat, to be used for activities and meetings, for as long as she remains in the position of Chair. In addition, a student will be hired by the Folketing to help the SCPAR Chair with her duties. SCPAR and the Arctic Council will be hosting an event during the 2023 Arctic Circle Assembly. She also noted that, for SCPAR to have a larger influence, its delegates should be more active in international news media.

A discussion regarding how forest fires have affected Canada this past year ensued. The Chair noted that the fires not only significantly affected Canada, but the smoke and carbon released also had an impact in other Arctic countries. Yvonne Jones explained that various fires burned at different stages in Canada's northern and Arctic regions in 2023 and that these fires triggered the mandatory evacuation of thousands of people. She also noted that the fires negatively affected the lifestyle and culture of many Indigenous people and will continue to do so for many years to come. Finally, she noted that the Government

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<sup>1</sup> [Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.](#)

of Canada would be establishing a Centre of Excellence for Wildland Fire Innovation and Resilience.

The Chair expressed her interest of staying on as Chair of SCPAR at the next conference. She also welcomed two new delegates: Olga Oinas-Panuma, Member of Parliament from Finland and Jeni sav Rana, Member of Parliament from Denmark, representing the Faroe Islands who also serves as Chair of the West Nordic Council. Chair Aaja Chemnitz highlighted that large, sparsely populated constituencies is something that all SCPAR delegates have in common.

## **PRESENTATIONS FROM ARCTIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS**

### **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna**

Kári Fannar Lárusson, Program Manager, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Secretariat presented the work of CAFF - a biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council established in 1991, before the Arctic Council was founded. More than 21,000 species, including many cold-adapted species, call the Arctic home. He explained that the Arctic has low functional redundancy, which means that sometimes, only one species performs a specific function, whereas in many other ecosystems, several species perform the same function. The loss of such a species is of much greater importance in the Arctic as a result.

Bob Zimmer asked a question about the CAFF wildland fires project. Kári Fannar Lárusson explained that the project focussed on the impacts of wildland fires on biodiversity and that it is led by the Gwich'in Council International. He noted that there is much to learn from Indigenous fire management practices.

### **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment**

Hjalti Hreinsson, Program Manager, Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) explained that PAME was established in 1993, also prior to the founding of the Arctic Council and that it focusses on conservation and the sustainable use of the marine environment. He discussed PAME's priorities of Arctic shipping, Arctic marine littler, marine protected areas, an ecosystem-based approach to management, and resource exploration and development and highlighted certain recent projects and reports.

## **STATUS OF THE WORK OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AND THE ROLE OF ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARIANS**

Morten Höglund, Chair of Senior Arctic Officials (Norway), Arctic Council discussed the status of the work of the Arctic Council via videoconference. He confirmed that the Arctic Council's working groups have resumed their work with experts and permanent participants since the pause. No working groups have held meetings, however, and their work is being conducted through written procedures.

Morten Höglund explained that he has held bilateral meetings with all Arctic Council countries, since it remains a consensus-based organization and that the Russian Federation remains part of the decision-making. He noted that all six permanent participant groups met in-person in Norway and that in person meetings will continue.

Yvonne Jones asked about the priorities of the Arctic Council in 2024 and how SCPAR can help it meet those priorities. Morten Höglund explained that a considerable amount of work had been completed by the working groups prior to the pause and that this work would be published soon. He noted that the goals identified by the Arctic Council in Reykjavik<sup>2</sup> would be pushed forward. Priorities discussed by Morten Höglund included ensuring the continuity of the Arctic Council, mental health and suicide prevention, and wildfires.

Yvonne Jones stressed the importance of ensuring the Arctic Council's continued strength and sustainability. She also noted that Canada began to implement the first National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, a subject that is also discussed at the Arctic Council, and that, although it is early in the implementation process, successes have been achieved.

Bob Zimmer explained that there is a need for sustainable development in the Arctic region and Morten Höglund stated that sustainable economic development is one of the pillars of the Arctic Council's current chairship.

Following Morten Höglund's presentation, a discussion ensued about how, or if, SCPAR should collaborate with the Russian Federation. Many delegates spoke to this point, and it was confirmed that the Russian Federation had recently left the Barents cooperation group. It was determined that, at this time, it would not be appropriate to include the Russian Federation in the work of SCPAR.

## **CONFERENCE OF ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARIANS, SWEDEN, MARCH 2024**

The draft program of the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, which is scheduled to take place 20 to 23 March 2024 in Kiruna, Sweden, was discussed. It was agreed that the conference statement would be on the topic of waste management – how to improve waste management in the Arctic and how to encourage non-Arctic countries to better manage their waste, as ocean currents often transport waste to Arctic regions.

Sweden will be hosting three seminars prior to the conference to help inform parliamentary colleagues on Arctic issues.

## **CANADIAN REPORT**

Yvonne Jones and Bob Zimmer presented the Canadian report on Arctic activities. The *Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy*; programs that encourage the use of clean energy technologies in remote communities; how inflation has affected Arctic food security, even though investments in food security programs have increased; and Canada's Ghost Gear Fund were highlighted by Yvonne Jones. Bob Zimmer noted that many non-Arctic countries have recently established Arctic policies and observed that forums such as SCPAR were important for Arctic countries.

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<sup>2</sup> The [Arctic Council Strategic Plan 2021 to 2030](#) (agreed to on 20 May 2021 in Reykjavik, Iceland) outlined the following three main strategic goals: environmental protection, sustainable social and economic development, and strengthening the Arctic Council.

## **FUTURE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

The next meeting of the Standing Committee is scheduled to take place at the 16th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Kiruna, Sweden.

# Annex 1



## THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

### MEETINGS IN EGILSSTADIR, ICELAND

16-17 October 2023

#### MEMBERS

Canada	Yvonne Jones, MP Bob Zimmer, MP Daniele Lafrance, Adviser
Denmark/ Greenland	Aaja Chemnitz, MP, Chair of SCPAR Iluuna Marie Heilmann, Adviser Peder Pederson, Secretary General of SCPAR
Finland	Olga Oinas-Panuma, MP Sari Wessman, Adviser
Iceland	Merja Thomenius, Interpreter Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir, MP Arna Bang, Adviser Hildur Edwald, Adviser
Norway	Lars Haltbakken, MP Willfred Nordlund, MP Bjørn Willy Robstad, Adviser
Sweden	Alexandra Anstrell, MP Eva Hjelm, Adviser
United-States	Dana Herndon, Adviser

#### OBSERVERS

Nordic Council	Oddný G. Hardardóttir, Member of the Nordic Council, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Iceland
West Nordic Council	Jenis av Rana, MP, Chair Lárus Valgarðsson, Secretary General Kári Fannar Lárusson, Program Manager, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Secretariat Hjalti Hreinsson, Program Manager, Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Morten Höglund, Chair of Senior Arctic Officials, Arctic Council

#### GUEST SPEAKERS

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP  
President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Egilsstaðir, Iceland
<b>DATES</b>	From October 16 to 17, 2023
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Bob Zimmer Yvonne Jones
STAFF	Daniele Lafrance
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 12,360.88
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 1,391.83
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 1,435.65
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$ 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 15,188.36</b>