



---

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the Second Part  
of the 2016 Ordinary Session  
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,  
and its mission to the Slovak Republic,  
the next country to hold the rotating Presidency  
of the Council of the European Union**

**Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association**

**Strasbourg, France and Bratislava, Slovak Republic  
April 18-28, 2016**

## **REPORT**

From 18 to 28 April 2016, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Strasbourg, France; and Bratislava, Slovakia to participate in the second part of the 2016 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and as part of a mission to the next country to hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The delegates were Hon. Percy Downe, Senator and Head of the delegation; Hon. David Wells, Senator; Mr. John Oliver, M.P; Ms. Jennifer O'Connell, M.P; Mr. Don Davies, M.P; Mr. Dean Allison, M.P. for the PACE meetings; and Ms. Michelle Rempel, M.P. for the mission to Slovakia. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Guyanne Desforges, and Association Advisor, Ms. Laura Barnett.

### **PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND PART OF THE 2016 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

From 18 to 22 April, the delegation participated in the second part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 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 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 second part-session a wide range of topics were debated in the Assembly and in its committees and political groups. The Assembly held debates on the following:

- Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee;
- Current affairs debate: The case of the "Panama Papers" and the concern about fiscal, social justice and public trust in our democratic system;
- Free debate;
- Joint debate: Preventing the radicalisation of children by fighting the root causes, and Towards a framework of competences for democratic citizenship;
- Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Palestinian National Council;
- Renewed commitment in the fight against antisemitism in Europe;
- Joint debate: A stronger European response to the Syrian refugee crisis;
- Human rights of refugees and migrants – the situation in the Western Balkans;
- Debate under urgent procedure: The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016;
- Intellectual property rights in the digital era;
- Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation;
- The humanitarian concerns with regard to people captured during the war in Ukraine;
- Debate under urgent procedure: After the Brussels attacks, urgent need to address security failures and step up counter-terrorism co-operation;
- The handling of public health emergencies;
- Forced migration: a new challenge;

- The case against a Council of Europe legal instrument on involuntary measures in psychiatry.

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Mr. Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission;
- Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister of Turkey;
- Mr. Heinz Fischer, President of Austria;
- Mr. Daniel Mitov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers;
- Mr. José Manuel García-Margalla, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Spain;
- Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia

## **B. Canadian Activities during the Session**

### **1. Overview**

The members of the delegation actively participated in proceedings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, including plenary proceedings and committee meetings. The members also attended the meetings of the various political groups in the Assembly. In addition, the delegation was briefed by Mr. Alan Bowman, and special meetings were held with Mr. Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Thomas Markert, Secretary of the Venice Commission; Mr. Lawrence Early and Judge Robert Spano of the European Court of Human Rights; Mr. Thomas Boček, the Council of Europe Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees; and Ms. Marja Ruotanen, Director of Human Dignity and Equality, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe.

### **2. Briefing by Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe**

Mr. Bowman, Deputy Head of Canada's Mission to the European Union and Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, provided the delegation with an overview of the history of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, including a focus on Canada's role as an observer state. He noted that in a sense, Canada approaches its role at the Council of Europe in a focused manner – rather than participating on issues across the board, we choose those issues on which we wish to focus. Mr. Bowman provided an extensive list of the Council of Europe committees and working groups in which Canada participates, some of the projects that Canada funds, and highlighted the Council of Europe conventions that Canada has ratified. Mr. Bowman emphasized that although Canada has participated in the drafting of a number of human rights treaties at the Council of Europe level, it does not often move on to ratification. He noted that ratification is a complicated process; rather, the hope is that the negotiated texts will become part of the larger conversation on human rights norms at the international level in which Canada will continue to play an active role.

In response to questions from delegates, Mr. Bowman went on to highlight how participation in the Council of Europe can support Canada's priorities – such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Strategic Partnership

Agreement (SPA), Ukraine-Russia relations, passenger name records (PNR), visa reciprocity, energy interests, climate change, and market access – at the European Union (EU) level. Mr. Bowman indicated that the Council of Europe is a good venue for broaching relations with Russia, as it is also a member of the Council of Europe; that the Council of Europe is moving forward with significant initiatives in the area of security cooperation on foreign fighters; and that participation in the Council of Europe allows Canada to gauge the political pulse on issues such as the “Brexit”, the “Grexit”, the rise of populist parties, and the migration crisis in Europe. Mr. Bowman concluded by answering questions from delegates with respect to expectations surrounding the ratification of CETA and the outstanding visa concerns with respect to Bulgaria and Romania.

### **3. Meeting with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**

After hearing a presentation of the annual activity report in the plenary proceedings, the delegation, accompanied by Mr. Bowman, met with Mr. Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, to discuss the role of his office and the issues currently on his office’s agenda. After a discussion of the Commissioner’s new intervener powers at the European Court of Human Rights, the power of social media, and issues such as migration, the plight of the Roma in Europe, police violence, media freedoms and LGBT rights, Mr. Muižnieks responded to specific questions from the delegation.

On the issue of the migration crisis in Europe, Mr. Muižnieks emphasized the lack of solidarity among EU member states, including a reluctance to accept refugees, the complexity of the problem and the importance of messaging. He noted that one of the problems is that many migrants seem to feel that they have an entitlement to settle where they like in Europe – this is fuelled by large families whose members all seek reunification in one particular location. He noted that only Germany seems to be approaching the migration issue from a demographics and labour force-need angle. He noted that one important means of inspiring sympathy for the plight of the migrants in Europe is to focus on the fact that 50% of those migrants are children, many of whom are unaccompanied minors. Although he recognized the fact that the Dublin Regulations are not working, he rejected suggestions that the 1951 Refugee Convention needs to be revised to deal with the crisis. He sees that climate refugees will be the new driver for how we perceive and define the concept of refugees and noted that resettlement in refugee camps may be the way forward in order to avoid problems of smuggling.

On the issue of terrorism and violence, Mr. Muižnieks noted that the United States has more significant problems than Europe in terms of weapons and drugs. Europe is facing problems with respect to alienation and lack of cultural integration – radical Islam has become an outlet for what might otherwise be gang warfare – as such, a focus on good integration policies is essential. He noted that Canada is often seen as a very Scandinavian type of country – it has successful multiculturalism and immigration policies, and significant recognition of social and economic rights. The discussion concluded with a conversation about the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey currently, including that country’s response to terrorism within its borders and the issue of media freedom.

#### **4. Meeting with the Secretary of the Venice Commission**

The delegation, accompanied by Mr. Bowman, met with Mr. Thomas Markert, Secretary of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), to discuss the role of the Commission and Canada's involvement with it as an observer state. Mr. Markert noted that since the Commission has expanded beyond Council of Europe member states, the role of observer states such as Canada has diminished. He discussed the work of the Commission since the fall of the Berlin Wall in terms of providing assistance with drafting constitutions, electoral laws and constitutional courts. He highlighted the fact that one area that still needs to be more fully addressed is helping countries to establish independent judiciaries – this is particularly the case in Eastern European countries with a strict civil law tradition that places less emphasis on the interpretive power of supreme courts. Mr. Markert discussed the role of the United States as a member of the Venice Commission and encouraged Canada to increase its participation in the Commission's activities and make the move towards becoming a full member state.

In response to questions from the delegation, Mr. Markert discussed the non-binding nature of the Venice Commission's opinions, although they do carry a great deal of weight within the European Union, as well as the mechanics of the interaction between PACE and the Venice Commission. In response to a question about best practices and electoral reform in the Canadian context, Mr. Markert replied that there was no one best model, although it is best when there is not one single national list, and that holding two rounds of voting can sometimes ensure a true majority. The meeting ended with a discussion of the Venice Commission's current observations on the political situation in Poland, in particular with respect to the new police surveillance laws and controversy surrounding the make-up and decisions of the constitutional court.

#### **5. Meeting with Officials from the European Court of Human Rights**

The delegation, accompanied by Mr. Bowman, met with Judge Robert Spano and Mr. Lawrence Early, Jurisconsult of the Registry at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Judge Spano provided the delegation with an overview of the history of the Court, from its creation in 1959 as a court of international diplomacy to counter totalitarianism, to its increasing influence during a "judicial phase" in the 1970s and 1980s, to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the establishment of the court on a permanent footing in 1998. Judge Spano referred to the current situation as in a fourth phase, where the court must deal with an enormous caseload (approximately 67,000 cases are currently on the docket) and confront skepticism among member states.

Judge Spano compared the Canadian and the European legal systems, noting similarities in scope between the European Convention on Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Judge Spano and Mr. Early also highlighted the fact that the ECHR frequently refers to Supreme Court of Canada decisions in its jurisprudence, and that there is an on-going dialogue between the two courts. Mr. Early went on to discuss the procedure by which cases are brought to the ECHR and the significance of cases that go to the Grand Chamber, while Judge Spano discussed the binding nature of the ECHR decisions. He emphasized that enforcement comes from the political branch at the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers rather than from

an executive branch as would happen at the state level. Mr. Early outlined the various remedies available for a breach of the Convention – there may be an award of compensation or costs, an order for a country to take a specific action (such as to release a prisoner), or a direction to remedy a particular structural problem (such as prison conditions). In response to questions from the delegation, Judge Spano also highlighted the process for nomination of judges to the ECHR and the role of PACE in this process.

## **6. Meeting with the Council of Europe Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees**

The delegation, accompanied by Mr. Bowman, met with Mr. Thomas Boček, the Council of Europe Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees to discuss his new mandate and the challenges that he is facing. Mr. Boček gave the delegation a brief overview of his mandate, created in late 2015, to assist Council of Europe member states in dealing with the migration crisis while respecting their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. His role is to collect information and identify concrete actions during fact-finding missions to areas facing particular challenges, such as Greece and Macedonia. Mr. Boček's mandate was expanded in March 2016 to focus on the situation of child migrants. However, his mandate is time-limited and will expire when the migration crisis recedes.

Mr. Boček's presentation was followed by a question and answer session that focused on the scope and evolution of the migration crisis in Europe, best practices and legal obligations. Mr. Boček emphasized the practicalities of the problem – building fences is not a viable solution, but Europe cannot simply open its doors either. He emphasized that no matter what steps are taken to deal with the migration flows, smugglers always seem to be one step ahead. Mr. Boček focused on the need to find a legal means of addressing migration flows that provides protection for those who are entitled to protection and deals with others in a manner that respects their human rights. In discussing the approach taken by the Visegrad Group, Mr. Boček noted that the Council of the European Union's decision with respect to quotas for migrant resettlement created challenges for a number of countries in the EU. The quota decision was adopted by a qualified majority, which did not signal a high acceptance rate. Mr. Boček emphasized the need for European solidarity to adequately address the migration crisis, as well as a real need to combat xenophobia throughout Europe.

## **7. Meeting with the Director of Human Dignity and Equality, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe**

For its last meeting with Council of Europe officials, the delegation met with Ms. Marja Ruotanen, Director of Human Dignity and Equality at the Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe, and Mr. Stanislas Frossard, Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Directorate of Human Rights and Antidiscrimination, Council of Europe. Ms. Ruotanen was preparing for a mission to Ottawa to discuss Council of Europe-Canada cooperation in the area of sport with Canadian officials. She gave the delegation a brief overview of the conventions that her Directorate works with, focusing on trafficking in persons, violence against women, and

the sexual exploitation of children, and noting that Canada is already very active in these areas with much experience to share.

Mr. Frossard informed the delegation of the conventions in the area of sport that the Council of Europe would like to engage on more fully with Canada, including in the areas of spectator violence, anti-doping, and the manipulation of sports competitions. Canada has already ratified the Anti-Doping Convention and was actively involved in the negotiations surrounding the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions – Mr. Frossard was eager for the Council of Europe to engage further with Canada on this latter convention. He also mentioned the work that his Directorate is doing to ensure gender mainstreaming in sport. Ms. Ruotanen concluded the presentation by encouraging Canada to share its best practices and to support the Council of Europe’s initiatives in these areas by considering signing on to these conventions.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session with the delegation that focused on the scope of the Council of Europe’s work in these areas, touching on professional sports, influential parliamentarians who are former athletes, and violence against women, including a discussion of how to move forward to protect women and children and raise awareness of human rights issues while also respecting cultural practices.

### **C. Canadian Interventions in Assembly Debates**

Canadian delegates participated in Assembly debates during the part-session, making nine interventions in debates on a range of broad topics. Links to the delegates’ speeches are reproduced below.

#### **a. Monday, 18 April 2016**

- Current Affairs Debate: Panama Papers

Senator Percy Downe delivered a speech in the context of the current affairs debate on the Panama Papers.<sup>1</sup>

#### **b. Wednesday, 20 April 2016**

- Renewed commitment in the fight against antisemitism in Europe

Mr. Dean Allison delivered a speech in the context of the debate on a renewed commitment in the fight against antisemitism in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

#### **c. Thursday, 21 April 2016**

- Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation

Senator Downe and Ms. Jennifer O’Connell were unable to speak, but tabled speeches in the context of the debate on assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Senator Downe’s speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly’s website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604181500E.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Allison’s speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly’s website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604201000E.htm>

- The humanitarian concerns with regard to people captured during the war in Ukraine

Mr. Dean Allison delivered a speech in the context of the debate on humanitarian concerns with regard to people captured during the war in Ukraine.<sup>4</sup>

#### **d. Friday, 22 April 2016**

- The handling of international public health emergencies

Mr. John Oliver and Mr. Don Davies delivered speeches in the context of the debate on the handling of international public health emergencies.<sup>5</sup>

- Forced migration: a new challenge

Senator David Wells delivered a speech in the context of the debate on forced migration: a new challenge.<sup>6</sup>

- The case against a Council of Europe instrument on involuntary measures in psychiatry

Mr. John Oliver delivered a speech in the context of the debate on the case against a Council of Europe instrument on involuntary measures in psychiatry.<sup>7</sup>

### **PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, THE NEXT COUNTRY TO HOLD THE ROTATING PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

From 24 to 28 April 2016, the delegation participated in a parliamentary mission to the Slovak Republic, the country that will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2016. During that mission, the delegation met with Slovak and EU parliamentarians, government officials, representatives from non-governmental organizations, political and economic experts, a United Nations Special Rapporteur, trade development representatives, and business and labour groups. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Canada's Embassy to Slovakia in Bratislava. The discussions held during these meetings pertained to Slovakia's priorities for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union; key issues in Canada-EU and Canada-Slovak relations, including CETA; and other important issues facing Slovakia and the EU, including migration.

---

<sup>3</sup> Senator Downe and Ms. O'Connell's speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604211000ADD1E.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Allison's speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604211530E.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Oliver and Mr. Davies' speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604221000E.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Senator Wells' speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604221000E.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Oliver's speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1604221000E.htm>



## **Official Dinner with Slovak Members of the European Parliament**

The delegation began its mission by attending an official dinner with Slovak Members of Parliament, hosted by the Canadian Embassy and the European Union Parliament Information Office in Slovakia. The dinner was attended by the delegation and two spouses, Ms. Joanna Oliver and Ms. Ann Matejicka; Ms. Kathy Bunka, chargé d'affaires a.i., Mr. Milan Harustiak, Trade Commissioner, Mr. Dušan Pastorek, Political and Public Diplomacy Officer, and Ms. Nada Franova, Political/Trade Assistant from the Canadian Embassy to Slovakia; Mr. Dionyz Hochel, Deputy Head of the EU Parliament Information Office in Slovakia; Mr. Boris Zala, Mr. Miroslav Mikolášik and Mr. Branislav Škripek, Slovak Members of the European Parliament; Ms. Iveta Hricova, Director General EU Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; Mr. Ivan Lancaric, Director General International Trade Policy and European Union, Ministry of the Economy; and Ms. Miriama Kiselyova, Senior State Counsellor, International Legal Affairs Unit, Ministry of Finance.

Ms. Bunka, Senator Downe and Mr. Hochel made welcoming remarks and a number of the attendees followed with comments about their experiences in Canada and Slovakia. This led into a discussion of Slovak elections for the European Parliament (in which 13% of Slovaks voted) and current EU issues faced by Slovakia, such as the migration crisis, which has been a point of tension between Slovakia and the region as a whole. A discussion was also held about foreign investment and trade in Slovakia, with Mr. Lancaric noting that most of Slovakia's trade is with its EU partners.

## **Briefing with the Embassy of Canada in Slovakia**

Ms. Kathy Bunka, chargé d'affaires a.i., welcomed the delegation to Bratislava and introduced her team at the embassy. Mr. Milan Harustiak, Trade Commissioner, followed with an overview of Canada-Slovak trade relations and his role at the embassy. He noted that Slovak exports to Canada total \$384.8 million, primarily in high end sports utility vehicles, while Canadian exports to Slovakia have grown dramatically over the last 15 years, with \$97.6 million in exports now focused on mineral oil and bitumen, iron ore, helicopters, electric machinery, electronics, optical and medical equipment, boilers, agricultural food products, and pharma. Canadian investment in Slovakia totals between \$700 and \$800 million, including commercial buildings, manufacturing plants, roofing shingles, information and communication technology, financial services, and food products. Mr. Harustiak highlighted the successful role of the embassy in the promotion of Canadian products and informing Canadian companies of investment opportunities in Slovakia, and helping Canadian companies establish themselves in the Slovak market, as well as the promotion of CETA.

Ms. Lubica Koniarova, Consular and Emergency Planning officer, provided the delegation with an overview of the embassy's consular services. She said that the embassy has approximately 1,500 consular contacts a year – primarily passport and citizenship requests. Ms. Koniarova also assists with emergency services to deal with situations of child abduction, injured Canadians, Canadians who are in prison or who need financial assistance while they are in Slovakia.

Mr. Dušan Pastorek, Political and Public Diplomacy Officer, followed with an overview of the International Experience Canada program. Slovakia sends 350 young professionals

a year to Canada on working holidays or for international co-op placements. The spots available to Slovaks fills up within minutes; however, Canadians appear less eager to travel to Slovakia with the program – the maximum number of Canadian participants in one year was 15. Slovakia's ambassador to Canada is currently working to raise awareness about the program and Slovakia for Canadians.

Ms. Kathy Bunka concluded the briefing with a broader discussion of Canada's relations with Slovakia, the role of the Canadian embassy, and an overview of the political situation in Slovakia after the March 2016 elections. The current coalition government, led by the Smer-SD party has 81 seats in the 150-seat National Council. Ms. Bunka discussed CETA, and Canadian and Slovak aspirations at the United Nations, where both Canada and Slovakia are hoping for a seat on the Security Council. Ms. Bunka provided an overview of Slovakia's relationship with the EU and NATO, noting that Slovakia is the only Visegrad Group country to be in the Eurozone, and mentioned the recent GLOBSEC conference held in Bratislava.

### **Meeting and Working Lunch with an Expert Panel on Politics, the Economy and Labour, and Civil Society**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka, Ms. Franova, Mr. Harustiak and Mr. Pastorek, met with Mr. Pavol Demeš, former Slovak Foreign Minister; Mr. Peter Novotny of Civic Eye; Mr. Vladimir Vano, an Economic Analyst for the Central and Eastern Europe region; Ms. Zuzana Wienk of the Fair Play Alliance; and Mr. Miroslav Hajnoš of the Confederation of Unions of Slovakia. Ms. Wienk gave the first presentation, focussing on Slovakia's political evolution and transformation over the last 100 years, in particular, the transition from Soviet state to open democracy, and the need to focus on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and transparency in the midst of such radical change. In this context, she discussed the challenges of the current election results, including anti-immigration policies, the recent transformation of the SNS party, the involvement of Most-Hid in the governing coalition and Prime Minister Fičo's pro-EU policies. Mr. Demeš followed with further comments on the recent elections and thanked the delegation for meeting with civil society as well as government officials during its mission. Mr. Demeš emphasized the unusual nature of the governing coalition and the fact that its rapid formation was likely linked to Slovakia's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He noted the existential challenges facing the EU right now – a surprise for Slovakia that worked hard to join this Western structure in an effort to further its domestic stability. Mr. Demeš concluded his remarks with a discussion of Canada-Slovak relations, and the interesting perspective that multicultural Canada can bring to Slovakia, where 10% of the population is ethnic Hungarian and 7% is Roma – with few Roma in leadership roles across the country. He noted that Canada's Prime Minister's "Because it's 2015" comment resonated in Slovakia.

Mr. Vano provided the delegation with an overview of the economic situation in Slovakia and the region, noting that Slovakia has made significant economic progress since joining the EU. However, it must be kept in mind that there are huge and growing regional disparities – prosperity in Bratislava due to foreign direct investment in the region is definitely not representative of the situation in the rest of the country. He noted that most Slovak exports go to Germany and that although salaries have grown,

Slovakia still has a qualified and reliable workforce that is attractive for investors. He noted the problem of structural unemployment in Slovakia, where a significant proportion of those unemployed in Slovakia are not qualified for the jobs on offer. He pointed explicitly to the challenges faced by the Roma population, as well as the brain drain effect driven in part by EU labour mobility. A large percentage of the Slovak workforce is over 50.

Mr. Hajnoš provided the delegation with an overview of the work of unions in Slovakia, with a particular focus on the Confederation of Unions of Slovakia which is the largest trade union in the country, although membership has declined dramatically in recent years. He noted efforts by the union to build links with Brussels and unions in other countries and to re-brand (moving away from the former Communist stigma) in order to attract a younger membership. During the Slovak Presidency his union will put forward a new campaign: “European work for a European salary.” Mr. Hajnoš mentioned that his union’s membership is divided on the issue of migration.

Mr. Navotny concluded the panel presentations by focusing on electoral policy in Slovakia and making the link with the Canadian government’s current move towards electoral reform. He noted the different systems tested in Slovakia since the 1990s, ending with the current system of one national vote with preferential lists. He said that this system seems to be stable and has helped achieve a better gender balance in parliament.

Discussion with the panellists continued over lunch with questions from the delegation surrounding the influence of oligarchs in Slovakia and the history of the current Slovak President, campaign financing and Slovakia’s new election commissioner, anti-immigration sentiment and the rise of the far right LSNS party in the recent elections.

### **Meeting with the State Secretary and Plenipotentiary for the Slovak EU Council and Senior Officials at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka and Mr. Bowman, met with Mr. Ivan Korcok, State Secretary and Plenipotentiary for the Slovak EU Council at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Mr. Korcok gave brief introductory remarks with respect to Canada-Slovak and Canada-EU relations and responded to questions from the delegation with respect to the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Mr. Korcok noted that Slovakia was in the final stages of planning for its Presidency, although the final program would not be announced until June. He emphasized that some issues cannot be planned for and may overshadow the entire Presidency, such as the British referendum on exiting from the EU in June and the EU’s success in regaining control over the migration crisis. Nevertheless, within this unpredictable context, Slovakia does intend to focus its efforts on economic and financial issues (such as managing the 2017 budget and planning for the budget beyond 2020, the Capital Markets Union and the Economic and Monetary Union); the digital single market and the Energy Union (to reduce EU and Slovak dependence on energy from Russia); and external issues (such as migration, free trade and EU enlargement). In this context, Mr. Korcok expanded on the implications of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership for CETA, given clear resistance to the EU’s negotiations with the United States; the consequences of EU enlargement fatigue

and the need to be sensitive to the needs of countries who want to join the EU; recent climate change initiatives at the EU level; and the reasons behind Slovakia's resistance to EU quotas for the redistribution of refugees in Europe.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the delegation met with other senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, including Mr. Pavol Hamžik, Special Advisor on Energy Security; Ms. Katarina Kováčová, Department of Security Policy; Mr. Milan Zachar, General Director, Department for the Slovak EU Council Presidency; Ms. Beata Jaczewska, Head of the International Visegrad Fund; Mr. Peter Kormuth, National Visegrad Coordinator; Marcel Babicz, Director for the Americas, and Marek Šafin, Director, Department of East Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Mr. Hamžik made a short presentation on the importance of energy security, the need to diversify the EU's energy imports, and Slovakia's experience providing a reverse flow of gas to Ukraine when that country's energy supply had been cut off. He noted that Slovakia opposes the Nord Stream proposal. Ms. Jaczewska made a presentation on the International Visegrad Fund and its current projects, mentioning that Canada is an external donor to the fund.

These presentations were followed by a question and answer session with the delegation in which Mr. Hamžik discussed the changes that have taken place in Slovakia since it joined the EU; the importance of the nuclear sector in Slovakia; the move towards energy efficiency; the financial benefits of being an energy transit country, thus linking Slovakia to Russia in some ways; and Slovakia's position with respect to Russia and Ukraine. Ms. Kováčová discussed the current security environment and the upcoming Warsaw Summit that shall focus on deepening NATO-EU cooperation, assistance for Ukraine, and counter-terrorism. Mr. Bowman added to the discussion with an overview of Canada's priorities at the EU, including CETA, SPA, security in Syria and Iraq, counter-terrorism, PNR, implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Canada-EU energy dialogue, the response to the migration crisis, and visa reciprocity.

### **Business Breakfast with the Canadian Council of the American Chamber of Commerce**

The Canadian Council of the American Chamber of Commerce organized a panel event over breakfast to discuss CETA with the business community in Slovakia. Mr. Jake Slegers, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce opened the event, followed by a keynote address by Mr. Ivan Lancaric, Director General International Trade Policy and European Union, Ministry of the Economy. In his address, Mr. Lancaric provided an overview of CETA and Canada-Slovak trade relations. Mr. Bowman followed, with a presentation on CETA from the Canadian Embassy to the EU in Brussel's perspective, focusing on the benefits of CETA for both Canada and the EU.

These presentations were followed by a panel made up of Senator Wells, Mr. Oliver, Mr. Davies, and Mr. Bowman, moderated by Mr. Slegers. Senator Wells responded to questions with respect to the involvement of the provinces during the CETA negotiations as well as the level of public support for the agreement in Canada. Mr. Oliver discussed the ratification process, and the opportunities that CETA will afford to the manufacturing and auto parts sector. Mr. Davies provided more detail on the environmental protection

and labour aspects of the agreement, discussed CETA's advantages for small and medium enterprises, and noted the need for transparency when negotiating agreements, commenting that the open discussion with respect to the investor-state dispute settlement provisions proved fruitful in the end when the provisions were tweaked during the legal scrubbing process. Finally, Mr. Bowman discussed the government procurement opportunities afforded by CETA, the possibility of provisional implementation at the EU level while waiting for member states to ratify, and the importance of clarity surrounding the concerns of those opposed to CETA – the agreement will not flood the EU market with Canadian agricultural products or lead to enormous migration flows.

### **Meeting with the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka, Ms. Franova, Mr. Milan Harustiak and Mr. Bowman, met with representatives at SARIO, the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency, including Mr. Robert Šimončíč, CEO; Ms. Romana Jakabová; Ms. Timea Hlohinec Balážová; Mr. Juraj Mihal; and Mr. Michal Polgár. Mr. Šimončíč provided a brief overview of SARIO's work attracting high quality foreign direct investment to Slovakia, and Ms. Jakabová made an in-depth presentation of investment opportunities in Slovakia. She noted that Slovakia is well-placed for investment both geographically and economically – the country quickly recovered after the 2008 crisis and gross domestic product growth is now 3.6%. Slovakia is one of the top 15 most open economies in the world given its high volume of exports. Ms. Jakabová noted that although Slovakia does not have the cheapest labour, it does have the highest labour productivity in Central and Eastern Europe and the third lowest production labour cost in the Eurozone. A new education model was implemented in 2015, aiming to ensure practical training opportunities for students. Ms. Jakabová highlighted Slovakia's energy dependency – with 99% of its gas imported from Russia, 89% of its oil from Russia and the EU, and 86% of its fuel from Russia, the EU and the United States. She finished by emphasizing the potential for innovation in Slovakia, with increasing research and development expenditures, and the great opportunities for Canadian companies in Slovakia.

This presentation was followed by a question and answer session with the delegation, with Mr. Šimončíč and his colleagues discussing economic incentives for Slovakia's regions; Slovakia's support for CETA; the country's ability to focus on its strengths to further its economy; the challenges of attracting highly skilled workers to Slovakia; and the lack of a specific green economy strategy, although Slovakia is meeting its EU milestones in this regard and is making progress in using green technology.

### **Roundtable on Migration with Civil Society Representatives and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka, Mr. Pastorek, Ms. Franova and Mr. Bowman, travelled to Trnava University Faculty of Law to participate in a roundtable on migration issues with civil society representatives and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Mr. François Crépeau. Ms. Zuzana Številová, Director of the Human Rights League, and Michaela Moravcikova, Vice Dean of the Law Faculty, made opening remarks, followed by introductions and interventions by Mr. Peter Varga

of the Law Faculty; Ms. Zuzana Vatrálová, Head of Office for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Slovakia; Ms. Grusa Matevzic of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee; Ms. Alena Kudzko of the Globsec Policy Institute; Ms. Alena Chudzikova of the Centre for Research on Ethnicity and Culture; Mr. Martin Dubéci; a representative from the United States Embassy in Slovakia; and Mr. Crépeau.

As part of the roundtable, Ms. Kudzko emphasized the challenges of expectations surrounding the current migration crisis facing Europe. She noted the mismatch of expectations, from migrants that want to go to Germany, to decision-makers in Brussels who do not fully understand the situation on the ground in Eastern Europe, to misinformation about migration propagated during the recent election campaign in Slovakia. Further elaborating on the situation in Slovakia, Ms. Chudzikova discussed her organization's work with municipalities to improve integration for migrants – this is an area that is particularly lacking in Slovakia. Mr. Dubéci followed on this point, noting that Slovakia perceives the migration crisis as a transnational problem, rather than seeing its domestic implications – the country is already dealing with challenges in healthcare, education and Roma integration – the country's leadership is not prepared to deal with migration challenges as well. However, migrants will not come to the country if they do not feel welcome. Ms. Številová noted initiatives in the NGO community to build the image of Slovakia as a destination country rather than simply as a country of transit. Ms. Vatrálová followed by emphasizing that the Slovak government is not making enough effort to convince migrants to come to the country. Responding to a question from Ms. Bunka, all participants indicated that the labour force and demographic need argument does not generally resonate in Slovakia – there is a strong sentiment of protectionist nationalism in most of the country.

In response to a question from Mr. Bowman, Ms. Številová and Mr. Dubéci discussed the implications of the EU's agreement with Turkey. Framing the discussion, Mr. Crépeau also provided those present with his view of the migration crisis, noting that he sees opportunities for hope everywhere (for example, in the mobilized NGO community, in an educated media, in the courage and determination of the migrants themselves), despite the clearly dire situation. He noted that he would be travelling to Greece soon to report on the situation of migrants there.

### **Dinner Reception with Slovak Members of Parliament**

The delegation attended a dinner reception hosted by the Canadian Embassy in Slovakia where delegates met with Slovak parliamentarians Mr. Juraj Droba, Mr. Peter Osusky, Mr. Martin Klus, and Mr. Eduard Heger, as well as the State Secretary for the Environment Ministry, Mr. Norbert Kurilla.

### **Meeting with the Minister of the Environment and Officials from the Slovak Ministry of the Environment**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka, Ms. Franova and Mr. Harustiak, met with Mr. Laslo Solymos, Minister of the Environment, as well as officials at the Ministry of the Environment, Mr. Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary; Mr. Milan Chrenko, Director General, Directorate for Environment Policy; Mr. Milos Grajcar, Director, Climate Change Department; and Mr. Ivan Rodina, Slovak Presidency Coordinator, Directorate for Environmental Policy.

Minister Solymos welcomed the delegation, gave a brief overview of the coalition government's manifesto, adopted the previous evening, and highlighted the priorities of the Council of the European Union – both the priorities of the current trio and Slovakia's upcoming priorities for its Presidency. After these welcoming words, Mr. Kurilla continued with a presentation of Slovakia's work in the lead up to its Presidency, including the work of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on Preparation of the Presidency, and the current trio's work on environment and climate change issues, noting the general priorities under the Juncker Commission: green growth, resource efficiency and the circular economy. Mr. Kurilla made particular mention of the EU's work on climate change, emissions, waste management, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. He noted that in any given agenda for a trio, 85% of the agenda will likely be dedicated to trio priorities, 10% to ad hoc crises, and 5% to an individual country's priorities. From the environmental angle, his ministry will be focusing on water management and helping to organize a number of important international meetings on the environment.

The delegation went on to a question and answer session with the government officials, with Mr. Kurilla elaborating on Slovakia's water management goals (protection of groundwater, flooding prevention, and working with other nations to protect the Danube), mainstreaming environmental issues into the government's broader manifesto, and Slovakia's aim to meet the EU's 20-20-20 climate change targets. Mr. Kurilla noted that Slovakia has been able to decouple economic growth from emissions, moving from coal to natural gas, but that it does need to protect its traditional sectors such as steel production. As such, the country is using EU funds to work towards innovation and increased efficiency, creating an enabling environment to make the right investment decisions. Slovakia is moving towards heavier reliance on nuclear energy.

### **Tour of Canadian Company in Slovakia, Martinrea Fluid Systems**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka, Mr. Harustiak and Ms. Franova, visited a Canadian company in Slovakia – the Martinrea Fluid Systems plant in Svaty Jur. Mr. Mike Hallam, General Manager of Martinrea Slovakia, provided the delegation with an overview of the work of Martinrea in Canada and Slovakia, emphasizing the growth of the Bratislava plant and the learning curve involved in taking on new automotive brands/clients. Currently Martinrea Slovakia is working with Ford, BMW, Fiat, and Rolls Royce. In discussing labour issues, Mr. Hallam mentioned that retention of middle managers is a significant issue for his company and others. Mr. Hallam then gave the delegation an in-depth tour of the plant, discussing each step in the production line and the different products available. He and a colleague then continued the discussion of Martinrea and the involvement of Canadian companies in Slovakia over lunch.

### **Participation in Conference on Migration and Refugees**

Ms. O'Connell and Ms. Rempel participated in a panel on Helping Refugees Via Resettlement Programmes as part of a conference organized by the Human Rights League, and the Canadian and United States Embassies in Slovakia. Other participants in the panel were Mr. Will Jones of the Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford; Mr. Robert Ward, Refugee Coordinator, US Embassy in Vienna; and Ms. Zuzana Vatrálová, IOM.

In her remarks, Ms. O’Connell provided an overview of the Canadian response to the Syrian refugee crisis, while acknowledging that Canada is in a geographically different position than Europe and so does not face the same challenges. She emphasized the fact that Canada is a country of immigration and that public support for welcoming Syrian refugees is high. Ms. O’Connell detailed how the screening and arrivals process work, noting that refugees have permanent resident status when they arrive in the country. She noted the challenges of integration, emphasizing the need to find adequate housing, provide language training and focus on both physical and mental health of refugees. Reflecting on her past days in Slovakia, she hoped that the business community in Slovakia could recognize the benefits of migration given the aging workforce, that the media could emphasize the human face of the migration crisis, and highlighted the need to plan in advance when possible in order to be able to better control migration flows.

Ms. Rempel’s comments echoed those of Ms. O’Connell but focused on the need to tackle concerns about integration from the longer term perspective. She noted the need to ensure that a constantly communicated plan is in place that focuses on training and the longer term participation of migrants in the economy, ensuring that they are not a drain on the system. In this vein, Ms. Rempel emphasized the importance of adequate housing and transparency about costs. She pointed out the differences between the government sponsored and privately sponsored refugee programs, and the need for the government to be clear about how it is going to support government sponsored arrivals into the future. She highlighted success of the privately sponsored refugee program and the fact that faith-based communities are a huge driver behind it.

### **Tour of the Volkswagen Manufacturing Facility**

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Bunka and Ms. Franova, toured the Volkswagen manufacturing facility outside Bratislava. The plant has become a specialist producer of large sports utility vehicles such as the VW Tuareg, the Audi Q7 and the Porsche Cayenne – many of which are exported to Canada. The delegation was taken through the facility to view the manufacturing and assembly process from parts to final assembly.

### **Meeting with Civil Society Representatives on Governance and the Rule of Law**

For its final meeting in Slovakia, the delegation met with representatives from civil society at the Canadian embassy to discuss governance and the rule of law. Ms. Lenka Surotchak, Executive Director of the Pontis Foundation began with an overview of her organization’s history and corporate social responsibility mandate. Currently the Pontis Foundation’s priorities in Slovakia and elsewhere are corruption, education and the effects of the brain drain, the elimination of poverty, and inclusion/integration of minorities and migrants. Mr. Milan Sagat, Executive Director of Via Iuris, followed with an overview of his organization’s mandate, seeking to use legal tools to target strategic areas in the public interest, focusing on social justice. He mentioned the “Jingling for Change” campaign, attempting to have parties sign a pledge to fight corruption and uphold the rule of law. He said that it is only by increasing trust in public institutions that the electorate will be able to move away from parties like the extreme-right LSNS that received wide support in the last elections. Finally, Mr. Pavel Sibyla, Director of the Stop



Corruption Foundation discussed his Foundation's work in helping whistleblowers, promoting investigative journalism, and raising awareness about corruption. He reiterated concerns about corruption in Slovakia and its role in the rise of the LSNS party.

Members of the delegation and embassy proceeded with question and answers, with Mr. Sagat noting that it is very difficult for NGOs to be heard by parliamentarians and government officials in Slovakia and Mr. Sibyla noting that although ministers and government officials claim to be willing to listen, nothing changes in response to NGO concerns. Ms. Surotchak commented that there are approximately 40,000 registered NGOs in Slovakia today – the NGO community is active, but most are very small and only dedicated to one specific project, such as building a playground. In a discussion about corruption, Mr. Sagat called for more scrutiny over the appointment of the Public Prosecutor and for politics in Slovakia to be treated as a public service, rather than as a business. Ms. Surotchak echoed this point, emphasizing the lack of accountability for parliamentarians. Mr. Sagat and Mr. Sibyla went on to note problems surrounding transparency in the financing of political parties, and corruption among the police and prosecution, where political interference is often clear. Mr. Sibyla pointed out that other major areas where corruption needs to be tackled are in public procurement and shell companies. He agreed that President Kiska is seen by many in a positive light, using his soft powers to deal with such issues as he can. Finally, both Ms. Surotchak and Mr. Sagat touched on the gender divide in Slovakia, with a low number of females in leadership roles. The only real exception to this appears to be in the NGO sector and among teachers.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Scott Simms, President  
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

## **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Mission to Slovakia and 2nd Part 2016 Ordinary Session PACE
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Republic of Slovakia and France
<b>DATES</b>	April 18-28, 2016
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
<b>SENATE</b>	Hon. Percy Downe, Senator, Head of Delegation Hon. David Wells, Senator
<b>HOUSE OF COMMONS</b>	Mr. John Oliver, M.P. Ms. Jennifer O'Connell, M.P. Mr. Don Davies, M.P. Mr. Dean Allison, M.P. Ms. Michelle Rempel, M.P.
<b>STAFF</b>	Ms. Guyanne Desforges, Association Secretary Ms. Laura Barnett Association Advisor
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$51,484.54
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$25,566.56
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$2,239.30
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$10,645.74
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$935.30
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$192.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$91,063.44</b>