



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its mission to the Republic of Estonia,
the next country to hold the rotating Presidency
of the Council of the European Union,
and its participation at the Second Part of the 2017 Session
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Tallinn, Estonia and Strasbourg, France
April 19-28, 2017**

From 19 to 28 April 2017, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Tallinn, Estonia; and Strasbourg, France as part of a mission to the next country to hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union and to participate in the second part of the 2017 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The delegates were Mr. John Oliver, MP and head of the delegation; Hon. Percy Downe, Senator; Hon. Ghislain Maltais, Senator; Mr. Don Davies, MP; Ms. Jennifer O'Connell, MP; and Mr. David Tilson, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Guyanne Desforges, and Association Advisor, Ms. Laura Barnett.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA, THE NEXT COUNTRY TO HOLD THE ROTATING PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

From 19 to 21 April 2017, the delegation participated in a parliamentary mission to the Republic of Estonia, the country that will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2017. During that mission, the delegation met with Estonian parliamentarians, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, government officials, representatives from think tanks, representatives from NATO and the NATO Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, health and policing experts, trade and digital development experts, a representative from a European Union (EU) agency based in Tallinn, and business and labour groups. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from Canada's Embassy to Estonia. The discussions held during these meetings pertained to Estonia's priorities for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union; key issues in Canada-EU and Canada-Estonia relations, including CETA; and other important issues facing Estonia and the EU, including digital policy and Brexit.

Briefing with Canada's Embassy to the Republic of Estonia

The delegation began its mission with a briefing by His Excellency Alain Hausser, Ambassador, who welcomed the delegation to Tallinn and introduced his team at the Embassy, including Ms. Kairi-Liis Ustav, Program Officer, and Ms. Jaana Ala, Secretary. Ambassador Hausser gave the delegation an overview of the administration of the Embassy, as its role is divided among the three Baltic States. He then provided an overview of Estonia's history, current economic situation and geopolitical fears.

Estonia achieved independence in 1991 and since then has made significant economic progress, with very low unemployment and no real debt. It was the first Baltic State to join the Eurozone and to reach its 2% NATO spending targets. It was also the first Baltic State to put in place a law on same sex couples, and the country has shown itself to be innovative in other ways, making a name through its advances in e-governance.

However, Estonia also faces a number of challenges, particularly with respect to demographics (including a low birth rate) and lack of diversity in a socially conservative society. Fears of Russia also overshadow many conversations in Estonia today. The Ambassador commented that the Russian government in many ways positions itself as the opposite of the decadent West and enjoys giving the impression that it can do what it likes – particularly when it can unbalance former Soviet territories that are thriving post-independence. In the last decade Estonia has dealt with a massive cyber attack,

an incident involving espionage by an Estonian citizen, and the kidnapping of an Estonian agent into Russia. In response, NATO has established a defensive and deterrent presence in the region.

The Ambassador went on to highlight Estonia's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, with an emphasis on prosperity, security and digital policy – as well as a preoccupation with respect to Brexit. He noted that the EU is struggling at the moment, faced with the pending loss of one of its most important members, while the German and French partnership that often seems to drive the EU also seems to be diminished.

The briefing concluded with the Ambassador responding to a series of questions from delegates about the nature of the new coalition government in Estonia, cybersecurity and dealing with Russian disinformation in Estonia, the pros and cons of Brexit, and the importance of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the EU (CETA), including the need to counter criticisms that are based on fear rather than fact.

Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Enterprise Estonia and the Estonian Trade Union Confederation

The delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Hausser and staff, met with Mr. Marko Udras, Head of Policy Formation and Legal Department at the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Mr. Märt Helmja, FDI Area Manager of Enterprise Estonia; Ms. Kristel Oitmaa, Deputy Head of the Estonian Investment Agency and Head of Foreign Representations of Enterprise Estonia; Mr. Rivo Riistop, Project Manager at Startup Estonia; and Mr. Peep Peterson, Head of the Estonian Trade Union Confederation. Mr. Udras began the meeting with a presentation on the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and an overview of Estonia's economy. Estonia currently has a 1.6% GDP growth rate, 0.1% inflation, and 6.8% unemployment. Although the labour force is less than 700,000 in a country of 1.3 million, Estonia is nevertheless well recognized for its business environment, including ease of doing business and freedom of the economy.

Mr. Helmja and Ms. Oitmaa followed with a presentation from the Estonian Investment Agency, whose role is to attract foreign investment to the country. They noted the "Work in Estonia" portal that allows companies and individuals to get a sense of working conditions in the country. In outlining why companies choose to invest in Estonia, Mr. Helmja emphasized Estonia's full industrial ecosystem, service quality, internet of things readiness, competitive business environment, strategic location, and innovation track record. They discussed the e-resident initiative that allows companies in other countries to establish themselves in Estonia. Ms. Oitmaa noted that there are currently 18,000 e-residents in Estonia, 229 of which are Canadian companies. Mr. Riistop then provided the delegation with an overview of Startup Estonia, a government initiative that aims to promote Estonian startup culture. Mr. Riistop noted that Skype was first invented in Estonia and that the country has continued to be a prime environment for such companies. Startup Estonia tries to influence a supportive legislative environment and seeks to build a strong start up ecosystem. Startup Estonia is looking to migration to help build the country's ICT sector. In response to questions from delegates,

Mr. Riistop noted that there is no particular tax incentive for startups, while Mr. Helmja noted that tax evasion is not a problem in Estonia because there is 0% taxation on profits re-invested in a company – thus there is no incentive to hide profits. Openness and transparency are encouraged. He also noted that CETA is perceived very positively in the country and that despite the country's history deriving its energy from oil shale, Estonia is moving aggressively towards renewables such as wind and biomass.

Finally, Mr. Peterson mapped out the situation of unions in Estonia. While for many years unions focussed on protecting the welfare of workers in the post-Soviet economy, today their primary areas of focus are upskilling (vocational schools, particularly in the ICT sector), health and safety reform and the sustainability of the health care sector, and wage issues (minimum wage is currently increasing at a rapid pace, pushing workers out of jobs). Mr. Peterson noted that Estonia is no longer a country of pure emigration – it has begun receiving immigrant workers from other Eastern European countries. In response to questions from delegates, Mr. Peterson and Mr. Helmja noted that Estonia has received excellent rankings by the OECD for its math and science education. IT and engineering jobs pay well in Estonia, so many students are entering this field.

Lunch with Estonian Parliamentarians

The delegation reconvened at the Embassy with the Ambassador and Embassy staff for a lunch with parliamentarians from the Canada-Estonia Parliamentary Group and the Estonian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Participants included Ms. Marianne Mikko, Chair of the Delegation to PACE; Mr. Eerik-Niiles Kross, Chair of the Estonia-Canada Parliamentary Group; Ms. Yoko Alender, Member of the Parliamentary Group; Ms. Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, Member of the Parliamentary Group; Ms. Gea Rennel, Head of the Estonian Parliament's Foreign Relations Department; and Ms. Liisi Vahtramäe, Advisor to the Delegation to PACE. Conversations over lunch touched on a wide variety of topics, including the separate school system in Estonia for Russian and Estonian speakers, a desire for a full-time Canadian Ambassador to Estonia, and current political controversies facing PACE.

Meeting with Estonian Think Tanks

The first day of the mission concluded by a meeting with Estonian tanks: the e-Governance Academy, Open Estonia, the International Centre for Defence and Security and Praxis. Mr. Arvo Ott, Executive Director of the e-Governance Academy began with an overview of his organization and Estonia's reliance on e-governance, noting that e-governance is not necessarily a product of technological expertise, but of creating the right frameworks based on strong cooperation. He emphasized the benefits of e-governance, including increased efficiency and economic competitiveness. Ninety-two percent of the Estonian population currently has an active digital identity card and signature, allowing them to access and share their data in a very secure way, and see how that data is being used and tracked. He commented that Estonia's use of the digital signature creates a savings of 2% of GDP. However, he noted that the shift to digital did not happen overnight. It took five years for most of the population to start filing taxes online. With respect to a question about online voting, Mr. Ott acknowledged that

although the country has built very secure systems, one can never say that they are 100% secure.

Ms. Mall Hellam, Director of Open Estonia, then provided the delegation with an overview of developments in civil society. One of the oldest NGOs in the country, Open Estonia was originally established with the support of George Soros and worked in a wide variety of areas. Today, the organization focuses on the future of the euro, open and transparent government, public discussion, and democratic Russia. Ms. Hellam noted that although Estonia has many more NGOs today than it did when it was first established, the country still has a long way to go compared to countries like Canada. Today 4.5% of the workforce is in the non-profit sector and there are 35 to 44 very active NGOs, with few active protests. She highlighted the fact that most NGOs today make their presence known through social media. Funding is always an issue, with more and more coming from individuals rather than the government.

Mr. Henrik Praks, Research fellow at the International Centre for Defence and Security, went on to discuss recent developments in the security climate in the Baltics, and the perception of threat from Russia in particular. He noted that Russia aims to re-establish its global power and that the country is an astute and opportunistic actor whose aim is to undermine NATO. The Baltic States are a prime target for such activity, given their geographic location and large Russian-speaking populations. Mr. Praks discussed Russian military exercises at the Baltic States' border and cyber and disinformation activities. He said that NATO's deterrent presence in the region is changing the narrative and is a positive step, but is not the end of the road – the region needs to be ready to adapt to a long-term confrontation with Russia, with increased defence efforts, NATO/EU cooperation, and political leadership. In response to questions from the delegation, Mr. Praks said that creation of an EU army is not likely in the near future, given the close political union that would be required. He added that Estonia's defence spending can be broken down as: one-third on personnel, one-third on operations, and one-third on investment in infrastructure. Estonia currently has mandatory conscription for males and its armed forces are very land-centric.

Finally, Ms. Katrin Pihor, Programme Manager at Praxis, discussed socio-economic developments in Estonia, noting that despite Estonia's successful economic development, challenges remain. She highlighted the fact that Estonia's high speed catch up with the EU average has now stagnated, and that the country currently faces an aging population which will have an impact on the active workforce in coming years. She noted the low levels of education for a large number of youth, the lack of easy access to the workforce for many disabled persons, the flat tax rate that does little for income re-distribution, and the fact that the country's digital success seems to have had little spill-over into the regular economy. In response to questions from the delegation, Ms. Pihor noted that there is a high gender pay gap in Estonia because there are few child care services in the country, although the government now seems to be investing in this area. Children are also being encouraged to look at fields outside of traditional gender roles. With respect to the Russian ethnic minority, she noted that Estonia has not been very successful at integration and there are serious problems in the separate Russian school system that has low teaching standards. However, some parts of

Estonia are heavily Russian-speaking, so the separate school system cannot simply be abolished.

Meeting with the NATO Force Integration Unit and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence

On its second day, the delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Hausser and staff, met with representatives of the NATO Force Integration Unit in Estonia, including Colonel Urmas Nigul, Commander of the Unit; Wing Commander Mark Attrill, Deputy Chief; Lieutenant-colonel Margus Aas, Coordination Officer; LCdr RCN Timothy Clark; and Mr. Siim Alatalu, Head of International Relations at the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. Wing Commander Attrill and Lieutenant-colonel Aas discussed the establishment of eight NATO Force Integration Units (in Estonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) following a decision made at the NATO Wales Summit in 2014. They provided an overview of the Estonian Unit's role as a support mechanism for the NATO battlegroup's (with troops from the United Kingdom, France and Denmark) presence in Estonia. With 20 national and 20 international staff, the Unit acts as NATO's eyes and ears on the ground to understand the political, economic and social context and impact of the battlegroup. The Unit essentially serves as a bridging mechanism between the host nation and NATO in order to facilitate information exchange, support the establishment of the battlegroup, and provide permanence during troop rotation. In response to questions from the delegation about dialogue with Russia given the tense situation in the Baltics and Russian military exercises being conducted on the border, Wing Commander Attrill and Lieutenant-colonel Aas noted that there is an official NATO-Russia communication forum with which Russia does not appear to be engaging at the moment. They highlighted the fact that the Unit monitors Russian military exercises at the border: there is no permanent Russian build up at the border – Russian presence fluxes depending on the military exercise schedule, including frequent snap exercises.

Mr. Alatalu followed with a description of the work of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. With a staff of 55 people, the interdisciplinary Centre seeks to support NATO by conducting training exercises and research with respect to cyber defence. Mr. Alatalu emphasized the rise of cyber attacks as a part of the evolution of warfare and the international community's to create a framework through which to understand and respond to such measures. At the Wales Summit NATO allies recognized that international law applies in cyberspace and can lead to the invocation of Article 5, while at the Warsaw Summit allies recognized cyberspace as a domain of operations much like air, land or sea. Mr. Alatalu noted that 95 countries are currently developing legislation to deal with cyberattacks, 77 have developed national cybersecurity strategies, 17 have declared offensive capabilities, and more than 20 have cyber command units. In this regard, Mr. Alatalu highlighted the flagships of the Centre's work: 1) support for NATO through conferences, seminars and training exercises, and 2) development of the Tallinn Manual on the International Law applicable to Cyber Warfare and its more recent update on cyber operations, providing an interpretation of international law in the cyber context. In discussing the work of the Centre, Mr. Alatalu encouraged Canada to go beyond its \$1 million contribution to the Centre of Excellence, and join the Centre as a sponsoring nation.

Meeting with Estonian Parliamentarians

The delegation, accompanied by the Ambassador and staff, then proceeded to Estonia's Parliament, the Riigikogu, to meet with parliamentarians from the European Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee: Mr. Toomas Vitsut, Chair of the European Affairs Committee; Ms. Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Ms. Tiina Kangro; Ms. Marianne Mikko; Mr. Tiit Terik; and Ms. Barbi Pilvre.

Ms. Mikko told the delegation that the European Union Affairs Committees operates in many ways like a mini-Parliament – before a minister leaves for Brussels he or she must receive a mandate from the Committee. On the issue of Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the EU, parliamentarians emphasized that Estonia hopes to add innovation and entrepreneurship to the EU agenda as part of its priorities. On Brexit, it was noted that Estonia is not likely to have a significant role to play in negotiations, despite its Presidency. The UK's withdrawal will have a significant and negative impact on the EU, and the EU will have to be tough in its negotiating stance to dissuade other member states from following suit, but right now it is in all members' interests to maintain ties with the UK. The country is leaving the EU, not Europe. With respect to CETA, it was clear that Estonia supports the agreement, although EU member state ratification may take time. If one member state ultimately declines to ratify, this would lead to failure of the entire agreement, although it is hoped that compromises and exceptions can be found to allow things to move forward. The conversation ended in a discussion about Canada-US relations in the era of the Trump administration, after which the delegation was given a tour of the Parliament buildings.

Meeting with Health Officials and Police on the Issue of Fentanyl

The delegation, accompanied by Ms. Ustav and Ms. Ala, then travelled to the National Institute for Health Development to meet with health officials and representative from Estonian police to discuss fentanyl abuse in the country. Estonia currently has the highest per capital fatal fentanyl overdose rate in Europe. Ms. Katri Abel-Ollo, Researcher of Infectious Diseases and Drug Abuse Prevention, and Ms. Kristel Kivimets, Senior Specialist of Infectious Diseases and Drug Abuse Prevention from the National Institute for Health Development, described the fentanyl problem in Estonia, where the drug, brought in from St Petersburg, created its first wave of overdoses in Estonia in 2002, reaching a peak in 2012 (170 deaths in a country over just over 1 million people) when a stronger stream of the drug arrived. The antidote, naloxone was introduced in Estonia in 2013. In 2015, a new type of fentanyl appeared on the market and the number over overdoses, which had begun to fall, started to rise again. In 2016, there were over 113 overdose deaths. When fentanyl first arrived in Estonia it was primarily being injected – the profile of users today is of fentanyl injectors in their 30s, many of whom are HIV positive. Ms. Abel-Ollo and Ms. Kivimets also noted that fentanyl has until recently been a primarily Estonian problem within the EU, although with new forms of the drug it is slowly expanding to other countries in the region.

Mr. Risto Lepp, Principal Investigator of Narcotics and Organized Crime of the Criminal Bureau of the Northern Prefecture, followed with a presentation from the perspective of police enforcement. He noted that in Estonia, approximately one-third of drug crimes

are fentanyl-related, although those numbers have recently dropped because the drug has changed. Today miniscule quantities of the drug are dangerous and often do not fit the minimum quantity requirements to make possession illegal. Fentanyl trafficking is a very hard crime to investigate because the quantities are so small: 0.0013g of the old version of fentanyl was required to be considered a crime, while 0.0008g is now required. New laws are needed to encompass constantly emerging new forms of the drug. Mr. Lepp added his comments on the profile of fentanyl users, noting that 90% of them are ethnic Russian and that they are primarily concentrated in urban centres such as Tallinn. He noted that fentanyl arrives in Estonia by two means: smuggled from Russia in liquor containing liquid fentanyl, and smuggled by parcel in powder form from China. Police are working on prevention, talking to students and teachers to help them understand the dangers of fentanyl and recognize the signs of fentanyl abuse. They are also working with addicted youth to help them avoid sentences through treatment programs, with methadone programs for adults.

A discussion ensued, with the Canadian delegation highlighting the apparent differences between what the actual drug looks like (primarily pill form in Canada) and profile of users in Canada and Estonia (a broad range in Canada, from middle class to street users to teenagers at parties), also touching on programs such as InSite and Good Samaritan legislation that do not exist in Estonia.

Meeting with the Estonian State Chancellery

The delegation's last day in Estonia began with a visit to Estonia's State Chancellery, accompanied by the Ambassador and staff, to discuss the country's coming Presidency of the Council of the EU. Mr. Martin Karner, Advisor at the EU Secretariat, led the presentation, accompanied by Mr. Margus Mägi (digital policy advisor), Ms. Liisbet Soosaluste (internal affairs advisor), Ms. Age Inkinen (justice affairs advisor), Ms. Mirjam Kaldma (internal affairs advisor), Ms. Meadhbh Costello (expert on presidencies of the Council of the EU), Ms. Sille Ruubel (advisor), and Ms. Kristina Kraiko (assistant).

Mr. Karner provided the delegation with an overview of the government structure surrounding the Presidency, noting that Estonia is currently negotiating its program with the other trio members (to be announced in June 2017), having had to move the Presidency up by 6 months because of the gap left by the UK after the Brexit vote. He shared Estonia's Presidency's new logo and motto: "unity through balance," noting that the country's overall goal is to ensure that the EU remains united and decisive. He highlighted Estonia's specific priorities:

- an open and innovative European economy – focusing on a stable banking sector and electricity market; prevention of tax evasion; and free movement of goods, people, services and capital.
- a safe and secure Europe – focusing on the fight against terrorism and organized crime; external border protections; tackling the migration crisis; EU-NATO cooperation; and the Eastern Partnership.
- a digital Europe – focusing on free movement of data; cross-border e-services and e-commerce; and secure electronic communications.

- an inclusive and sustainable Europe – focusing on labour mobility and the free movement of people; equal opportunities in the labour market; social inclusion; and a sustainable environment.

Broadly, the country knows that it cannot fully accomplish all of its objectives during its mandate.

Ms. Soosaluste went on to discuss internal security and the need to maintain both efficient and strong borders. She said that the solution is to go digital, noting that information systems are a core priority for internal security, while discussing various initiatives in this regard. She also highlighted the EU's struggles in response to the migration crisis, including partnership framework agreements with various countries of origin and transit in Africa and negotiations with respect to redistributing the burden of migrants arriving in the EU.

Mr. Magi then provided the delegation with an overview of Estonia's digital agenda, including its goal of ensuring that those working in all EU policies areas consider the digital angle moving forward. He emphasized the importance of the free movement of data, e-government and e-commerce, underscoring the benefits of the "once only principle": individuals in Estonia only need to provide their information to the government once – they are not asked for the same information again by other departments. With respect to cybersecurity, Mr. Magi recognized that no online system can ever be 100% protected, but human errors can also occur when working with paper. In this regard he emphasized the importance of openness and ensuring that the correct legislative frameworks are in place. He noted that the risk of unauthorized access to information is less concerning than the risk of unauthorized changes to the data that is stored electronically. In response to questions from the delegation he recognized that e-governance may lead to privacy concerns, but that there are solutions, and that Estonia has put in place strong e-privacy regulations, particularly with respect to telecoms.

Finally, Ms. Inkinen discussed the justice file, providing a brief overview of EU work with respect to criminal law measures to counter terrorism and organized crime, money laundering, jurisdiction over cyberspace, and protection of privacy rights in the context of data retention. She mentioned the importance of strengthening e-justice solution so that individuals within the EU can find information on legal systems in other EU member states.

Meeting with Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs

Accompanied by the Ambassador and staff, the delegation then met with the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sven Mikser; Acting Undersecretary, Political Affairs, Mr. Paul Teesalu; Counsellor for Cyber Policy, Security Policy Division, Mr. Miko Haljas; and Director of the Common Foreign and Security Policy Division, Political Department, Ms. Erika Ellamaa. The meeting began with a discussion of Estonia's support for CETA and the two-step ratification process. The Minister confirmed that ultimately, legally, ratification is needed by all EU member states for the agreement to move beyond provisional ratification. However, this is new territory for the EU and there is much uncertainty – the hope is that, despite the potential for national stumbling blocks, careful negotiation will allow the agreement to receive final ratification. Minister Mikser went on

to discuss Estonia's foreign policy priorities, including trade, security, climate change, development (although Estonia is not a large player in this field), human rights, and gender equality.

A discussion ensued about cyber threats and relations with Russia. Minister Mikser noted the rise of hybrid threats that involve a mix of propaganda and cyber attacks, emphasizing that Estonia is attempting to create the appropriate legal frameworks to deal with such threats and taking the necessary steps to protect critical cyber infrastructure. With respect to cooperation and dialogue, the Minister noted that Estonia has working level cooperation with Russia and is not opposed to dialogue in theory, but that Estonia has not been particularly active in pursuing high level political dialogue – there is no point in dialogue for dialogue's sake. Whenever the two parties do meet, the list of unresolvable differences seems to get longer. He noted that President Putin is trying to build a legacy premised on restoration of the Empire and has no interest in Western style democracy. On a general level, the international community can guess at his intentions, but his day to day actions keep other countries on their feet. He agreed with the international community's message of unity and resolve, commenting that the sanctions regime has had an impact. The Russian economy is in bad shape, but it is not ready to collapse soon. He noted that Estonia currently spends 2.2% of its GDP on defence, and that the country encourages its EU partners to spend more.

With respect to Brexit, the Minister noted that a summit would be held on 29 April to finalize a negotiating strategy. The much-discussed "divorce payment" should not be seen as a penalty but is simply a settling of accounts. He commented that the major issues at the moment are mobility, jurisdiction over court cases, and the EU-UK relationship post-Brexit. Negotiations will need to be wrapped up by late 2018.

On the issue of the migration crisis, Minister Mikser commented that Estonia is not on the migration route, so has little experience with the issue. Estonia has agreed to accept its EU-mandated migrant quota, but also wants to be sure that those they accept actually want to come to Estonia and will not simply move on to Germany or Sweden as soon as they can.

Finally, in response to a question about the suggestion about a resident ambassador, Minister Mikser said that he would welcome a resident Canadian ambassador in Estonia, but that his primary concern is with respect to Canada's current proposal for a shared ambassadorship between the EU and Germany.

Meeting with Representatives from the e-Estonia Showroom and eu-LISA

The delegation finished its mission to Estonia with a presentation by Ms. Anna Piperal, Managing Director at the e-Estonia Showroom, followed by a presentation from Mr. Krum Garkov, Executive Director of the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA). Ms. Piperal provided the delegation with a comprehensive overview of Estonia's digital policies, noting that its success in this field has allowed the small country to distinguish itself amongst its peers. Estonia has been rated first for tax competitiveness by the OECD and 9th on Freedom House's economic freedom index. The ICT sector accounts for 7% of Estonia's GDP in a country where internet access is considered a social right – 100% of the population has access to 3 or 4G and 85% has access to

broadband. The highlight of Estonia's digital program is the digital identity card and digital signature that allows individuals to sign all documents except marriage/divorce and real estate transactions electronically. Digital signatures have led to a 2% savings in GDP due to more efficient policing, shorter hospital waiting times, e-voting, environmental savings, and efficient tax collection (tax forms are pre-populated by the employer and other institutions, allowing the tax payer to simply verify the information and submit). Ninety percent of state services are online, with over 900 connected organizations and databases. Ms. Piperal went on to note that the country is not married to one particular company to provide digital services – it is easy to move on to new providers when needed. She also emphasized that cross-border cooperation is very important for Estonia's digital policy, allowing the country to exchange data with partners more easily.

Responding to questions about privacy concerns, Ms. Piperal said that in Estonia there is an understanding that only certain people have access to digitally stored information – there is a high sense of trust that no big brother is watching because of the open nature of the society. Individuals can always see who has accessed their accounts. She provided a detailed discussion of the blockchain technology used to protect digital accounts.

Providing a breakdown of some of the key areas served by digital services, Ms. Piperal noted that:

- Estonia has the most start ups per capita in the world. The country now has 17,000 e-residents based in 135 countries, with 14,000 new companies established.
- The first national online vote was in 2005, although only 1% of the population used the new service at the time. Now 30% of the country votes online from 116 countries.
- Since 2008, all health data is digitized and shared between the patient and the institution, and patients can indicate trusted individuals who can also view the data. Doctors can lose their licence if they misuse data.
- Over 85% of schools in Estonia use an e-school system, and Estonia was ranked 1st in the OECD's PISA tests for Europe. On average, twice as many students are enrolled in ICT-related courses than in other developed countries.
- Since policing has gone more digital, trust has increased in police because everything is recorded. There are now 70% more offence reports a day, with 100% more look ups on vehicles a month. Estonia is the second fastest country in Europe with respect to court proceedings.

Mr. Garkov then followed with a presentation of the work of eu-LISA, the EU organization responsible for border management and security platforms for law enforcement in Europe, including the Schengen Information System, the Visa Information System, and EURODAC. The organization is also involved in protecting

data security and has plans to expand in the future to respond to the digital transformation of its work environment. He said that there is a real horizontal effort to increase the added value of systems already in use, creating true interoperability. He noted that the EU is facing the challenge of balancing security with privacy/data protection, and is currently looking at Canada's e-visa travel authorization system as it moves towards such a system at the EU level in the future.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND PART OF THE 2017 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

From 24 to 28 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;
- Observation of the early parliamentary elections in Bulgaria (26 March 2017);
- Free debate
- The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey;
- Human rights in the North Caucasus: what follow-up to Resolution 1738 (2010)?;
- Fighting income inequality as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development;
- Protecting refugee women from gender-based violence;
- Current affairs debate: European values under threat: addressing rising xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe;
- 25 years of the CPT: achievements and areas for improvement;
- Abusive use of the Interpol system: the need for more stringent legal safeguards;
- Debate under urgent procedure: Alarming developments in Hungary: New NGO law restricting civil society and closure of international university;
- The protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities;
- Possible ways to improve the funding of emergency refugee situations;
- Technological convergence, artificial intelligence and human rights;
- Debate under urgent procedure: Draft Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property.

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers;
- Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic
- Mr. Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights;
- His Majesty the King of Spain.

In addition, a hearing was held on 25 April with Mr. Pedro Agramunt, President of the Assembly, followed on 28 April by a decision taken by the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of no confidence in the President.¹

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 held bilateral meetings with the PACE delegations from Poland and Finland.

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

The delegation met with Mr. Bowman, Deputy Head of Canada's Mission to the European Union and Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, on 25 April, engaging in a dialogue with the delegation and seeking his response to their various questions. On the issue of CETA, Mr. Bowman confirmed that the agreement will go into provisional application once Bill C-30 receives Royal Assent in Canada. The parts of CETA that will not apply during provisional application are the Investment Court System and criminal sanctions related to video recordings. Each EU member state, and some regional parliaments, will have to ratify the agreement for full implementation to take place. If one of these parliaments states that it will never ratify CETA then ultimately, the entire agreement will fail. However, this has never happened before, so there is a legal vacuum and exact procedures are not clear. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that provisional implementation of a treaty can be repealed if one party states irrevocably that it will never ratify. However, what does "irrevocably" mean? What if the government of the day changes? If one country announces that it will definitely never ratify CETA, the Council of the EU will have to decide if this annuls provisional application. Most likely, in such a situation, intense negotiations will follow between that country and the EU to see if agreement can be reached. Actually putting an end to provisional implementation is likely to be quite difficult. Most EU member states already expressed their concerns about CETA early on in the ratification process and those concerns have been addressed. At the moment, no country has indicated that it will not ratify CETA, although some countries are more ambiguous about their positions than others. Mr. Bowman expressed confidence that as CETA is applied provisionally, fears of its implications will dissipate as EU member states realize the benefits of free trade through the reality of implementation.

Mr. Bowman also provided the delegation with a brief overview of the allegations facing the President of PACE with respect to a Russian-sponsored mission to Syria and concerns surrounding corruption with respect to the involvement of various PACE members on the Azerbaijani file.

¹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, "[PACE Bureau declares 'no confidence' in Pedro Agramunt as President.](#)"

Mr. Bowman also provided the delegation with an overview of the economic health of the EU, pointing out that the Eurozone is experiencing robust growth and that most member states are in a good position, although some countries such as Italy and Greece are still experiencing problems. On Brexit, Mr. Bowman emphasized the emotional loss the EU leadership has faced over the UK's pending departure. Right now Prime Minister May is attempting to strengthen her position by calling an election, but the EU negotiating position is strong, as the bloc needs to work on a consensus basis. On the French elections, Mr. Bowman provided a brief outline of Emmanuel Macron's political career and discussed the fall of the two mainstream parties in the lead up to the first round of voting. Mr. Bowman also provided an overview of the political situation in Poland and the level of support for CETA in the current Parliament.

Finally, Mr. Bowman discussed the role of Mr. Stéphane Dion as the new Ambassador to the EU and Germany, noting that Mr. Dion is close to the Canadian Prime Minister, demonstrating the importance that Canada attaches to its EU relationship.

3. Bilateral Meeting with the Delegation from Poland

The same afternoon, members of the delegation and Mr. Bowman met with Mr. Dominik Tarzynski from the Polish delegation to discuss CETA. Mr. Tarzynski indicated that opinions are divided on CETA in Poland, where concerns based on myths about the use of genetically modified organisms have surfaced. The Polish Parliament expects to vote on CETA in two years, in the hopes that the current government can pass it before the next election. The vote will require a two-thirds majority, ensuring that the nation has its say on the issue. Mr. Tarzynski thought that CETA was most likely to pass at that time despite a great deal of current negative sentiment in the country (he estimated that 75% of the population did not support CETA). Mr. Tarzynski expressed the need for the European Commission to share more information about CETA in Poland in order to ensure an informed discussion when the agreement comes before Parliament. He said that myths abound because there is little widely shared information to counter disinformation. It will be important to foster openness and transparency moving forward. Increased contact from the Canadian government and Canadian companies would also serve to encourage the Polish population – what products and investments will Canada be sending towards Poland? Such lobbying is essential to inform Poles, who are skeptical of the agreement because of the Investment Court System and because of the difference in size between the countries, leaving some to believe that Poland can only lose out on the deal. However, he emphasized that it will be important to see the impact of provisional implementation in order to make an informed decision about final ratification. Mr. Bowman and members of the delegation responded by listing the specific advantages of CETA for Poland and assuring Mr. Tarzynski that Canadian representatives would follow up – both at the government level and maybe through the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group, which is currently dormant.

4. Bilateral Meeting with the Delegation from Finland

Finally, members of the delegation met with Ms. Anne-Mari Virolainen and Mr. Petri Honkonen from the Finnish delegation to discuss CETA. Ms. Virolainen emphasized that free trade is very important to small countries such as Finland and that most parties in the country are in favour of CETA – only the left alliance still has some concerns

about the Investment Court System. The Finnish Parliament aims to ratify the agreement by October. The conversation also touched on a number of issues currently shaping the EU, such as the coming French and German elections, as well as Brexit.

C. Canadian Interventions in Assembly Debates

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

a. Tuesday, 25 April 2017

- **Fighting income inequality as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development**

Senator Percy Downe, Mr. John Oliver and Mr. Don Davies delivered speeches in the context of the debate on fighting income inequality as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development.²

b. Wednesday, 26 April 2017

- **Protecting refugee women from gender-based violence**

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell delivered a speech in the context of the debate on protecting refugee women from gender-based violence.³

- **Current affairs debate: European values under threat: addressing rising xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe**

Mr. John Oliver delivered a speech in the context of the current affairs debate on European values under threat: addressing rising xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe.⁴

- **25 years of the CPT: achievements and areas for improvement**

Senator Ghislain Maltais and Mr. David Tilson delivered speeches in the context of the debate on 25 years of the CPT: achievements and areas for improvement.⁵

- **Abusive use of the Interpol system: the need for more stringent safeguards**

Mr. Tilson delivered a speech in the context of the debate on abusive use of the Interpol system: the need for more stringent safeguards.⁶

c. Thursday, 27 April 2017

² Senator Downe, Mr. Oliver and Mr. Davies' speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704251530E.htm>.

³ Ms. O'Connell's speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704261000E.htm>.

⁴ Mr. Oliver's speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704261530E.htm>.

⁵ Senator Maltais and Mr. Tilson's speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704261530E.htm>.

⁶ Mr. Tilson's speech is available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704261530E.htm>.

- **The protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities**

Senator Maltais and Mr. Oliver delivered speeches in the context of the debate on the protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities.⁷

- **Possible ways to improve the funding of emergency refugee situations**

Mr. Davies and Mr. Tilson delivered speeches in the context of the debate on possible ways to improve the funding of emergency refugee situations.⁸

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

⁷ Senator Maltais and Mr. Oliver's speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website:
<http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704271530E.htm>.

⁸ Mr. Davies and Mr. Tilson's speeches are available on the Parliamentary Assembly's website:
<http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2017/E/1704271530E.htm>.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Mission to the Republic of Estonia, the next country to hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and Second Part of the 2017 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
DESTINATION	Tallinn, Estonia and Strasbourg, France
DATES	April 19-28, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Percy Downe Hon. Ghislain Maltais
HOUSE OF COMMONS	John Oliver, Head of the delegation Don Davies Jennifer O'Connell David Tilson
STAFF	Guyanne Desforges, Association Secretary Laura Barnett, Association Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$50,303.49
ACCOMMODATION	\$25,109.19
HOSPITALITY	\$1,131.07
PER DIEMS	\$12,860.46
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$410.32
MISCELLANEOUS	0
TOTAL	\$89,814.53