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Parliamentary Association



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**Parliamentary Mission to the country that will next hold the  
rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union  
and Second Part of the 2018 Session of the PACE -- Vienna,  
Austria and Strasbourg, France -- Canada-Europe  
Parliamentary Association (CAEU)**

**Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association**

**Vienna, Austria and Strasbourg, France  
16-27 April, 2018**

# REPORT

From 16 to 27 April 2018, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of five parliamentarians to Vienna, Austria, 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 2018 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The delegates were Mr. Scott Simms, MP and head of the delegation for the Austria part of the mission; Hon. Percy Downe, Senator and head of the delegation for the PACE part of the mission; Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (for the PACE part of the mission); Mr. David Tilson, MP; and Mr. Don Davies, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Guyanne Desforges, and Association Advisor, Mr. Maxime-Olivier Thibodeau.

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

From 16 to 20 April 2018, the delegation participated in a parliamentary mission to the Republic of Austria, the country that will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2018. During that mission, the delegation met with Austrian parliamentarians; representatives from the Austrian government; representatives from Bombardier, a Canadian company present in Austria; and representatives from Austrian think tanks, civil society and labour groups. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from Canada's Embassy to Austria. The discussions held during these meetings pertained to Austria's priorities for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union; key issues in Canada-European Union and Canada-Austria relations, including the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA); and other important issues facing Austria and the European Union (EU), including migration and Brexit.

### **Briefing with Canada's Embassy to the Republic of Austria**

The delegation began its mission with a briefing by Her Excellency Heidi Hulan, who welcomed the delegation to Vienna. Ambassador Hulan mentioned that, in addition to being Canada's Ambassador to the Republic of Austria, she is Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna, as well as Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. She devotes approximately 75% of her time to working on multilateral issues, the remaining 25% being devoted to bilateral issues.

Ambassador Hulan explained the particular circumstances that led to Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's election in October 2017. According to her, the migration crisis created a great deal of anxiety in the Austrian population and was the main reason for Kurz's centre-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) forming a coalition government with the right-wing, nationalist, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in mid-December 2017. Ambassador Hulan also explained that while the Austrian society is conservative and has a deep-seated and fundamental respect for the rule of law, it also has a strong attachment for its EU membership.

Ambassador Hulan highlighted that the €400 billion Austrian economy is very strong, enjoying a growth of 2.9% in 2017 (and a current GDP of 389 billion Euros) and counting within its ranks a large proportion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are world-leaders in their respective field. She also noted that Austria has a trade surplus with Canada. Regarding the ratification of CETA between Canada and the EU, she commented that ratification is part of the government coalition's program.

Regarding Austria's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, Ambassador Hulan mentioned that the Presidency will be guided by the motto "A Europe that protects" and its priorities will consist of the following three key areas:

- security and the fight against illegal migration;
- retaining competitiveness through digitalisation; and
- stability in the neighbouring regions (particularly the accession of the Western Balkans to the EU).

She also mentioned that, according to the Austrian government, the country will face two major challenges during its Presidency: the Brexit negotiations – that will need to be finalized under its Presidency – and the negotiation of the new EU multiannual financial framework (the EU budget), which will come into effect in 2021. Also, the EU elections next year will bring a lot of legislation to consider and an increased need for coordination.

Regarding the situation in Slovakia, Ambassador Hulan noted that the country supports the EU in general and CETA's ratification in particular. She also noted that the country is doing well economically, with a 4% growth last year, which makes it first in the EU, per capita. Ambassador Hulan recalled that the assassination of an investigation journalist prompted a crisis that led the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior to resign. She mentioned a number of problems in the Slovak Republic, such as the discrimination suffered by the Roma population, who represent approximately 10% of the total population. According to her, the Slovak population is very anti-migration at present. Ambassador Hulan also highlighted that corruption is an important problem in the country and expressed doubts that the government will be able to tackle it, as the rule of law and institutions' independence are being challenged. At the same time, she expressed doubts that the opposition parties – which are splintered at present – will be ready for the next elections scheduled in 2020.

### **Meeting with representatives of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue**

The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) is an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to promote interreligious dialogue. The delegation met with Mr. Fahad Abualnasr, KAICIID's Director General, along with other representatives. He explained that, in order to fulfil its mandate, KAICIID works in collaboration with the United Nations (UN), the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the African Union.

He also explained that KAICIID is trying to create a link between religious leaders and political leaders.

Professor Patrice Brodeur, who is a Senior Adviser at KAICIID as well as a professor of religious studies at the University of Montreal, presented KAICIID's Peace Mapping Project, which is an interactive, online, crowd-sourced database that seeks to map existing tensions and conflicts in the name of religion at the same time as it documents positive actions related to interreligious dialogue. According to Pr. Brodeur, the Peace Mapping Project – which has 498 organizations listed – is one of the only places online where the scope of interreligious dialogue can be seen.

### **Meeting with Mr. Marc Carillet, Deputy Director of the Vienna Liaison Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly**

The delegation met with Mr. Marc Carillet, Deputy Director of the Vienna Liaison Office of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA). Mr. Carillet is responsible for representing the Special Representative – who, in turn, represents the OSCE PA at the seat of the OSCE in Vienna – in governmental-based platforms and other OSCE meetings and conferences, in addition to serving as Chief Administrator of the Vienna Liaison Office. Mr. Carillet recalled that the OSCE is not a treaty-based organization, but is rather based on commitments made by the member states.

Mr. Carillet explained that members of the OSCE PA are also members of their national parliaments, as it is the case for members of PACE. Areas of collaboration between the OSCE PA and PACE include election observation, such as the one in Azerbaijan the week prior to that meeting. Mr. Carillet explained that Russia had made that election observation difficult, trying to blur the message by inviting a lot of observers and sending its own separate observers, for example. He argued that the advantage of the OSCE PA over PACE is that Russia participates in its work, together with North American countries, which makes it an important forum to have difficult but necessary debates.

### **Meeting with Ambassador Hulan and Other Canadian Representatives in the “V4” Countries**

The delegation then met with Ambassador Hulan and three other Canadian representative in the “V4” countries (for “Visegrad Four” or “Visegrad Group”), which are the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic (of which Ambassador Hulan is also responsible).

Her Excellency Barbara C. Richardson, Canada's Ambassador to the Czech Republic, recalled that Miloš Zeman – who campaigned against immigration and in favour of closer ties with Russia – was elected president for a second five-year term in January 2018. Ambassador Richardson explained that President Zeman comes from the populist movement and presented himself as an “anti-corruption crusader,” corruption being a major issue in Czech Republic (in particular with regard to EU funds). President Zeman is also the second richest man in the country and controls the second most important media organization.

Her Excellency Isabelle Poupart, Canada's Ambassador to Hungary, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, explained why she considers the situation in Hungary to be

worrying. For example, she commented that Fidesz, the right-wing governing party led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has captured all levels of government, controls the media, and has cracked down on non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Prime Minister Orbán – who also campaigned against immigration – was re-elected in April 2018 for the third time in a row with a two-third parliamentary majority, which means that he can modify the Hungarian Constitution at will. Such power was used in Prime Minister Orbán's previous mandates to adopt laws that were controversial because they affected the judiciary and the media. Ambassador Poupart warned that the next legislative measures taken under that power could include making NGOs' work practically impossible in Hungary; their representatives have even expressed concern about their personal safety. Also, the Central European University in Budapest (of which Michael Ignatieff is the rector and for which George Soros – whose financial support for Hungarian civil liberties and civil rights groups has been questioned publicly by Mr. Orbán – has provided funding), could close down.

Canada's Chargé d'affaires to Poland Jeremy Wallace expressed concerns regarding the independence of the judiciary in Poland, in light of the reform that started to be implemented two years ago. He mentioned the ongoing discussion and compromises being reached between Poland and the EU on that matter. Mr. Wallace recalled the importance of Polish diaspora in certain countries, as compared to a population of approximately 40 million people in Poland. For example, the United States has a Polish diaspora of approximately 10 million people and Canada has a Polish diaspora of approximately 1 million people. The diaspora is also important in Ireland, where Polish is the second most spoken language. Mr. Wallace also recalled that Poland has a positive image of Canada; that the two are NATO allies and are like-minded on security issues; and that Poland is Canada's most important trading partner in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **Meeting with representatives of the Austrian Economic Chamber**

The delegation met with representatives of the WKO, the Austrian Economic Chamber, which is a "social partner" in Austria, a political actor that is consulted on the content of legislation and on forming a government coalition, for example, in addition to being the employers' representatives. According to Mr. Christoph Schneider, Director of WKO's Economic Policy Department, the business interests that WKO represents are not dissociable from political interests. He explained that among the issues that were important for the FPÖ in negotiating its participation to the government coalition was the question of entrepreneurship, the FPÖ being a proponent of a more entrepreneurship-prone approach. Mr. Schneider argued that the strong social safety net in Austria is very expensive and the WKO, as an employers' representative, considers that it went overboard. The WKO is not expecting much reduction in social services from the new coalition government, but rather an attempt to stabilize their cost.

Mr. Schneider noted that 99.6% of companies are SMEs in Austria and that only 170 companies have more than 1,000 employees. He also noted that Austrian companies have established themselves in the last years at a medium-high technological level, counting on an excellent private education system that focuses on vocational training.

## **Meeting with Austrian Government Officials on the Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

The delegation met with Austrian government officials who play a role in preparing the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU. Regarding the impact of Brexit and the next EU budget on Austria's Presidency of the Council of the EU, Mrs. Regina Kothmayr, Director of the Task Force on the Presidency of the Council of the EU at the Federal Chancellery, asserted that these issues are related and that they will be at the center of Austria's Presidency. She explained that Austria does not intend to increase its contribution to the EU budget after Brexit, which is a minority position within the EU.

Her Excellency Ambassador Christina Kokkinakis, Director of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (BMEIA), recalled that since the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, foreign affairs and security policy are not under the responsibility of the Presidency of the Council of the EU but rather under the responsibility of Federica Mogherini, who is the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. Ambassador Kokkinakis explained that even if foreign affairs and security policy are not the Presidency of the Council of the EU's responsibility, there is an obligation at the member state level to come to a common position towards security, and that the Presidency of the Council of the EU chairs working groups and committees of representatives on that issue, at the lower level. In that perspective, Austria identified some issues that it intends to deal with related to security, such as the situation in the Western Balkans; exterior border protection; and challenges to the global multilateral system.

Mr. Rodrigo Enrique Belaunde Vargas, from the Department for Multilateral Foreign Economic Policy (BMEIA), explained that the government coalition had planned to ratify CETA within five years, but that the plan has changed to ratify it before the beginning of Austria's Presidency on 1 July 2018. Of note, on 16 May 2018, the Cabinet has decided that CETA's ratification will be presented to Parliament. On 5 June, the Economics Committee of the National Council will debate CETA's ratification. On 13 or 14 June, the National Council will put CETA to a vote, which is likely to pass because of the support of the ÖVP, FPÖ and the NEOS. The ratification process would then be finalized by the resolution of the Federal Council on 28 June and the final signature of Austrian President Van der Bellen thereafter.

## **Meeting at the European Agency on Fundamental Rights**

The delegation met with Mr. Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the European Agency on Fundamental Rights (FRA), an independent agency of the EU. Mr. O'Flaherty explained that FRA's mission is to make sure that the EU is human rights compliant by providing legal analysis to law makers in Brussels, for example. According to Mr. O'Flaherty, human rights are hard-wired in the EU, through the *Treaty on European Union* and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, which is under-used by member states because insufficiently known. Mr. O'Flaherty also mentioned that the Court of Justice of the European Union is behaving increasingly like a human rights court.

Regarding the migration crisis, Mr. O'Flaherty expressed serious concerns about the treatment of migrants and the disproportion among EU member states' sharing of responsibility. He also expressed concerns about the respect for the rule of law in the

V4 countries, where the courts are being challenged, the press is being muzzled – at the same time as the media is being controlled by governments – civil society’s place is shrinking, and institutions are losing the population’s support. For example, Mr. O’Flaherty mentioned that NGOs working in the field of human rights in these countries are being increasingly pressured. According to Mr. O’Flaherty, the EU has focussed on the extreme situations in the past, at the expense of ordinary people’s concerns, which is why the FRA is increasingly focussing on issues affecting the general population.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Institute for Advanced Studies**

The delegation met with Professor Martin Kocher, who is the Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, and Doctor Erich Griessler, who is an expert in techno-science and societal transformation. The Institute for Advanced Studies is an independent post-university research center whose mission is to analyze major societal challenges drawing on evidence-based scientific methods and to provide answers that are objective and independent. Pr. Kocher explained that the Institute for Advanced Studies uses behavioural science to advise government departments on how to change the way – or the moment when – people fill their tax returns or how not to use cell phones while driving, for example. Providing some context with respect to Austria’s approach to energy, Dr. Griessler explained that the Austrian population’s opposition to nuclear power dates back to 1978, when a referendum determined that a nuclear reactor, which was ready to use and fully operational, would never be used.

### **Meeting with the Representative of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy**

The delegation met with Doctor Arnold Kammel, Director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES). Dr. Kammel explained that AIES was founded in 1996, following Austria’s accession to the EU and that AIES works closely with the departments of foreign affairs and defence. As a EU think tank on security and defence issues, AIES provides briefings to government officials and publishes research publications, for example. According to Dr. Kammel, Austria brings negotiation and mediation skills in international relations; it is an “honest broker.” According to him, Austria’s role as a mediator will be the most important aspect of its Presidency of the Council of the EU.

### **Meeting with Austrian Parliamentarians**

The delegation met with Austrian Parliamentarians in a meeting with members of the National Committee on Foreign Policy and Matters of the European Union. Mr. Reinhold Lopatka, Member of the Austrian Parliament and speaker for EU affairs on behalf of the ÖVP, as well as Chairman of the National Committee on Foreign Policy and Matters of the European Union’s sub-committee of EU affairs and member of the European Commission task force for subsidiarity, noted that the ÖVP is the longest-serving party in the EU. Regarding CETA’s ratification, Mr. Lopatka noted that a proposal had been made to submit CETA’s ratification to popular vote in a referendum. According to Mr. Lopatka, the government should make the decision to ratify CETA.

Regarding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, Mr. Lopatka recalled that the Estonia-Bulgaria-Austria Trio Programme already decided that migration would be a

priority for the Presidency. He also stressed the importance of the Western Balkans in neighbourhood relationships.

### **Meeting with Members of the Austrian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe**

Mr. Andreas Schieder, Member of the Austrian Parliament and President of the Socialist parliamentary group, Chairman of the National Committee on Foreign Policy and Matters of the European Union, as well as a member of the Austrian delegation to PACE, explained that the Austrian delegation to PACE voted against sanctions towards Russia because they consider PACE to be a forum for debate, which can be also useful to gather information. He noted that Russia has now put all its parliamentary weight in the OSCE PA. He also noted that the problems affecting PACE's Presidency are not over yet: Michele Nicoletti, the actual President of PACE, has been defeated in the recent Italian elections and will need to be replaced.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Federation of Austrian Industries**

The delegation met with representatives of the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV), which is a "classical political pressure group" that has a voluntary membership of approximately 4,700 members. Mr. Igor Sekardi, from the Department of International Relations at IV, explained that the debate about CETA in Austria was one of the most intense in the EU. According to Mr. Sekardi, none of the arguments used to oppose CETA were directly related to Canada; they were more related to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the United States. He noted that TTIP is not an issue any more since 20 January 2017, when France, Belgium and Austria stated that they could not support it; it is now practically dead.

Mr. Sekardi mentioned that IV lobbied strongly in favour of CETA and that the advantages of its provisional application can already be seen, with the absence of tariffs to pay. Regarding the mixed agreement aspect of CETA, which led to the agreement's provisional application, Mr. Sekardi also proposed that, in the future, the EU negotiate two separate agreements: one free trade agreement that would be under the exclusive responsibility of the EU, and an investor protection agreement that would require ratification by the member states.

### **Meeting with Experts on Nuclear Security**

Ambassador Hulan hosted a lunch at the official residence with Mr. Cornel Feruță, Romania's former Ambassador and Resident Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UN organizations in Vienna; Mr. Massimo Aparo and Mr. Gary Dick, representatives of the IAEA; and Mr. Alexandre Bilodeau, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN. Mr. Feruță asserted that the key challenges facing the IAEA at present are the Iran nuclear deal and the situation in North Korea.

Regarding the nuclear deal with Iran, Mr. Feruță explained that it was a challenge to negotiate for several years, before the parties came to an agreement. He argued that nuclear security involves different things, such as radioactive material that can be taken from drones or stolen from hospitals in Africa to be used in weapons. Mr. Dick explained that the advantage of the Iran deal for IAEA is that it provides it with predictability about



Iran's nuclear capacity development. Regarding the situation in North Korea, Mr. Feruță said that IAEA is very active on the issue of denuclearisation, in which many groups are involved.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

The delegation met with Ms. Meera Venkatesh and Mr. Shaukat Abdulrazak of the IAEA at the UN Headquarters in Vienna. Ms. Venkatesh explained that the three main areas of work of the IAEA's Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications are:

- Science and technology;
- Safety and security; and
- Safeguards.

She explained that 66% of the IAEA's 138 member states are interested in non-nuclear power applications, such as the use of radiation, the use of isotopes and stable isotopes, and quality control.

Mr. Abdulrazak gave a few examples of non-nuclear power applications that are "success stories":

- the Sterilization of Insects Technique, which can be used on fruit flies and add value for member states by allowing them to export their products, for example; and
- the Sahel Water Project, that uses isotope hydrology.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime**

Also at the UN Headquarters, the delegation met representatives of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Representatives stressed the importance for the UNODC of partnerships with policy-makers and parliamentarians; with the World Customs Organization; and with member states' border authorities, such as the Canada Border Services Agency, to share evidence, for example. They explained that without policy guidance from member states, the UNODC could not operate.

The meeting was followed by a visit of the UNODC's laboratory, where representatives demonstrated techniques and technology designed to detect counterfeit passports used by drug smugglers, among other things. They estimated the amount of drugs being seized worldwide at 15%, which varies a lot depending on the country. The legalization of marijuana and compliance of Canadian legislation with international treaties was also discussed.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Wassenaar Arrangement**

The delegation met representatives of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies (WA). The Head of the WA's Secretariat, Ambassador Philip Griffiths of New Zealand, explained that the three control lists are at the centre of the WA's work:

- the munitions list;
- the dual-use list, which is divided between “sensitive” and “very-sensitive” items; and
- the “catch-all” list, that contains items that are controlled in certain circumstances and that would apply to countries under UN embargo, for example.

Mr. Vincent Fleuriot, Senior Officer (Control Lists) at the WA, explained certain challenges related to the implementation of the controls, where the WA does not want to over-control items that are available on the mass market, for example. Ambassador Griffiths mentioned that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has developed a competence on small arms and light weapons that is now a reference for the WA, and that Canada is also involved in the development of cyber-tools.

### **Meeting with Representatives of Bombardier in Vienna**

The delegation met with representatives of Bombardier, which mostly builds trains and light-rail vehicles in Vienna. The delegation learned that Bombardier’s relationship with Vienna started in 1959, when Bombardier bought the Rotax plant in order to use its engines on Ski-Doos. Bombardier later acquired Lohnerwerke in 1970, and started the production of low-floor trams in 1990. Today, approximately 540 employees – mostly engineers – are working on the visited site. The meeting was followed by a tour of Bombardier’s factory.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Vienna**

The delegation met with representatives of the Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Vienna. They explained that the University of Vienna was founded in 1365 and counts approximately 94,000 students, which makes it the biggest university in Austria and one of the biggest in Europe. They stated that the University of Vienna has excellent relations with Canadian universities, such as the University of Toronto, the University of Montreal, the University of Ottawa and Queen’s University. There are approximately 50 Canadian students at the University of Vienna at present, as compared to approximately 225 students from the United States. The delegation learned that there were no tuition fees for Austrian students and that fees were approximately €800 per semester for Canadian students. The meeting was followed by a guided tour through the old University of Vienna.

## **PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND PART OF THE 2018 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

From 23 to 27 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;
- Free debate;
- State of emergency: proportionality issues concerning derogations under Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Climate change and implementation of the Paris Agreement;
- Funding of the terrorist group Daesh: lessons learned;
- Joint debate: The protection of editorial integrity; and The status of journalists in Europe;
- Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe;
- The situation in Libya: prospects and role of the Council of Europe;
- Debate under urgent procedure: Follow-up to the report of the Independent Investigation Body on the allegations of corruption within the Parliamentary Assembly;
- Current affairs debate: Europe's role in peacemaking initiatives in Syria;
- Debate under urgent procedure: Copenhagen Declaration, appreciation and follow-up;
- Legal challenges related to hybrid war and human rights obligations;
- Fighting organised crime by facilitating the confiscation of illegal assets;
- Drug-resistant tuberculosis in Europe; and
- Integration, empowerment and protection of migrant children through compulsory education.

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Mr. Nikola Dimitrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”;
- Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and
- Mr. Anders Samuelsen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers.

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

### **1. Overview**

Members of the delegation participated in proceedings of the PACE, including plenary proceedings and committee meetings. Members also attended meetings of political groups represented in the Assembly.

In addition, the delegation was briefed by Mr. Bowman, met with representatives of the Council of Europe who work on the Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021, with members of the Irish delegation to the PACE, and participated in the “Barbershop” event entitled “Men as agents of change for gender equality.”

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

The delegation met with Mr. Bowman on 24 April. With respect to CETA's ratification, Mr. Bowman noted that Italy will need to form a government before we know where it stands on this matter. He also noted that the situation in Greece was uncertain, because the government could change in a near future.

Mr. Bowman pointed out that the Independent Investigation Body on the allegations of corruption within the Parliamentary Assembly's report is at the center of PACE's debates during the part-session.

Mr. Bowman mentioned that the future of Russia's participation to the Council of Europe is still uncertain. Russia has traditionally been one of the largest contributors to the Council of Europe's budget, but it stopped contributing in 2016 (which means €33 million less in a total budget of €436 million). This situation has had an important impact on the Council of Europe's budget and the Secretary General is trying to bring Russia back within its ranks. Among the potential positive gestures from Russia that PACE could consider for allowing its return, Mr. Bowman mentioned implementing the Minsk Agreements and respecting human rights in Crimea, for example. Mr. Bowman also mentioned that Turkey will be reducing its contribution to the Council of Europe's budget (which means €18 million less in the budget). He highlighted the fact that the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize was given to a judge who is imprisoned in Turkey at present. According to Mr. Bowman, the Council of Europe is trying to establish a process within Turkey to improve the current situation where an important part of the population is imprisoned.

Mr. Bowman recalled that the next country to hold the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe (May – November 2018) will be Croatia, whose main objectives will be the fight against corruption and the preservation of cultural goods. He also recalled that Croatia was among the first countries to ratify CETA and that it recently adhered to the Istanbul Convention, the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), in spite of a strong opposition in the Croatian population, including a third of the governing party's members.

Mr. Bowman informed the delegation that the Canadian government intends to ratify the Lisbon Convention, the Council of Europe and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization's [Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region](#), which was tabled in the Canadian Parliament on 31 October 2017. He also noted that, as a result of Canada's participation in the Council of Europe partial agreement entitled "European Support Fund for the co-production and distribution of creative cinematographic and audiovisual works" (or "Eurimages") as an associate member since 13 March 2017, Telefilm Canada has received more funding. According to Mr. Bowman, Canadian film producers are very successful in applying for co-production funds and have received more than the €1 million that Canada spends as a member.

In the context of Brexit, Mr. Bowman noted the possibility of the United Kingdom (U.K.) exiting the Council of Europe, because the U.K. does not want to be subject to the European Court of Human Rights. Also, the U.K. does not want to be subject to the Court of Justice of the European Union and that would keep the U.K. from participating

in the single market after Brexit, as a non-EU member state (like Norway and Switzerland, for example).

In answer to the delegates' questions about the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association's future missions, Mr. Bowman suggested that the Association visit the Balkans. Montenegro recently became a NATO ally and Serbia is in a difficult situation that could benefit from Canada's involvement, for example. According to Mr. Bowman, a parliamentary delegation would generate a lot of interest in that region, where Canadian ministers rarely visit.

### **3. Meeting on the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021**

The delegation met with Mr. Matthew Barr and Mr. Sergei Bazarya from the Council of Europe Office of the Directorate General of Programmes, who work on the [Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021](#) (the Action Plan), "a strategic programming instrument which aims, through co-operation, to accompany the country in its efforts to bring legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy and, through this, to support the country in meeting its obligations as a Council of Europe member State." The Council of Europe representatives recalled that Ukraine joined the Council of Europe in 1995 and that Canada has been working on democratic development in Ukraine since 1989. They also recalled that the Action Plan has been adopted by consensus by all 47 member states, including Russia.

Mr. Barr and Mr. Bazarya explained that there is ongoing work in Ukraine on constitutional and judiciary reforms; centralization (the amalgamation of communities); media reform (Canada was funding one of the projects); rights of internally displaced persons (institutions were also displaced). They also explained that, following a Council of Europe recommendation, an Anti-corruption Court was set up in Ukraine but is still awaiting adoption by the Ukrainian Parliament. According to the Council of Europe representatives, the Ukrainian government is dragging its feet in the Anti-corruption Court adoption process because there is a risk that some of its members would be prosecuted before that court, which would hurt the governing party in the upcoming elections. They consider corruption to be an important problem in Ukraine, where it is widespread in the culture.

### **4. Meeting with members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

The delegation met with members of the Irish delegation to PACE. Mr. Keith McBean, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe, and Mr. Bowman also participated in that meeting. The delegates discussed the potential benefits of CETA, where there could be an increase in Irish exports to Canada in chemicals and plastic products, information and telecommunication products, as well as liquors and spirits. Regarding a potential increase in Canadian exports to Ireland, Mr. Bowman mentioned, as examples, pharmaceutical products, salmon, and lobster. He also mentioned the importance of Canadian investments in Ireland.

Regarding Brexit and the difficult issue of a border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, Mr. Bowman argued that Canada could be a potential mediator, counting many

Canadians of Irish descent from both the South and the North of the island, as opposed to the United States where most people of Irish descent come from Ireland alone. In that regard, the Irish delegates were interested in the infrastructure required for the border between Canada and the United States.

#### **5. “Barbershop” event entitled “Men as agents of change for gender equality”**

Some delegates participated in the “Barbershop” event entitled “Men as agents of change for gender equality,” which was sponsored by Ms. Rósa Björk Brynjólfssdóttir, the Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to PACE, and organized by the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the Icelandic Ministries of Welfare and Foreign Affairs, the Icelandic delegation to PACE, and the Gender Equality Unit of the Council of Europe. Mr. Ásmundur Einar Daðason, the Icelandic Minister of Social Affairs and Equality; Mr. Thorbjörn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and Mr. Arnold De Fine Skibsted, Chair of the Committee of Ministers, were also presenters on the panel.

Mr. Daðason argued that Iceland’s paternity leave legislation has the potential for changing mentalities. He also noted that Iceland had presented its instrument of ratification for the Istanbul Convention that same day.

Ms. Brynjólfssdóttir told of her experience as a victim of sexism in her previous work as a journalist and playing soccer as a young woman. She noted the pay gap between men and women, despite the fact that women outnumber men at university. According to her, it is important to educate boys and young men on this issue.

Secretary General Jagland argued that voting for a woman because she is a woman is not sexism; it is legitimate. He also stated that the Istanbul Convention represents a revolution, because it makes domestic violence a public, no longer a private, affair.

Mr. Bowman seized the opportunity of the time allotted to questions for the panelists to call for the involvement of more men in this kind of discussion. He recalled that gender equality is the most important international priority for the Canadian government. For example, Mr. Bowman noted that it is Canada’s first priority as the host for the upcoming G7 meeting, which has a new gender equality council.

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

Senator Percy Downe, Ms. Jennifer O’Connell, Mr. David Tilson, and Mr. Don Davies participated in Assembly debates during the part-session, making four interventions in debates and tabling one additional speech on a range of broad topics. Links to the delegates’ speeches are available on the PACE website.<sup>1</sup>

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Scott Simms, M.P.

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

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<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Verbatim Records. [2018 - Second-part session](#)

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Parliamentary Mission to the country that will next hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Second Part of the 2018 Session of the PACE
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Vienna, Austria and Strasbourg, France
<b>DATES</b>	April 16-27, 2018
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
<b>SENATE</b>	Hon. Percy Downe, Senator Hon. Doug Black, Senator
<b>HOUSE OF COMMONS</b>	Mr. Scott Simms, M.P. Ms. Jennifer O'Connell, M.P. Mr. David Tilson, M.P. Mr. Don Davies, M.P.
<b>STAFF</b>	Ms. Guyanne Desforges, Association Secretary Mr. Maxime-Olivier Thibodeau, Advisor
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$51,787.74
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$26,091.98
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$1,893.38
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$12,854.13
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$526.82
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$93,153.25</b>