

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its mission to Ireland and Northern Ireland, United Kingdom**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Dublin and Cork, Ireland
and
Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom
March 5-9, 2018**

REPORT

From 5 to 9 March 2018, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU) sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Ireland and Northern Ireland, United Kingdom (U.K.). The delegates were Mr. James Maloney, MP and head of the delegation; Mr. Scott Simms, MP and chair of CAEU; Hon. René Cormier, Senator; Hon. David Wells, Senator; Mr. Ziad Aboultaif, MP; and Ms. Irene Mathysen, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Guyanne Desforges, and Association Advisor, Ms. Laura Barnett.

From 7 to 9 March, CAEU was joined by a delegation of six parliamentarians from the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association (RUUK). The delegates were Mr. Frank Baylis, MP and head of the delegation; Hon. Patricia Bovey, Senator; Hon. Donald Plett, Senator; Hon. John MacKay, MP; Mr. Daniel Blaikie, MP and Mr. Kerry Diotte, MP. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Mr. Jean-Francois Pagé and Association Advisor, Ms. Sonya Norris.

During meetings in Dublin, Cork and Belfast, the delegation met with ministers, parliamentarians and other political representatives; government officials; and representatives from business associations, Canadian companies, and think tanks. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from Canada's Embassy to Ireland and the Honorary Consul of Canada in Belfast. The discussions held during these meetings pertained to key issues in Canada-European Union, Canada-Ireland and Canada-U.K. relations, including the *Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)* and Brexit.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO IRELAND (5 TO 7 MARCH 2018)

Briefing with Canada's Embassy to Ireland

The CAEU delegation began its mission with a briefing by His Excellency Kevin Vickers, Ambassador, who welcomed the delegation to Dublin and introduced John Roxburgh, Senior Trade Commissioner, and Jackie Ellis, Political Officer at the Embassy. Ambassador Vickers provided the delegation with an overview of the political landscape in Ireland and emphasized the importance of the Canada-Ireland relationship – both in terms of historical Irish emigration to Canada and current close government ties.

In this regard, Ambassador Vickers highlighted the importance of tourism to the Irish economy and the significant growth in Canadian tourists – 248,600 Canadians visited Ireland in 2017 and a number of direct travel connections have been created in recent years. Five thousand dual Canadian-Irish nationals currently live in Ireland. The Ambassador emphasized the strain that this increased Canadian presence has created for consular services at the embassy and the need for additional staff to manage the workload.

The Ambassador also mentioned the significant growth in Canadian trade with Ireland, in addition to Canadian companies establishing themselves in the country and notable

Ireland-Canada film collaborations. In this context, he highlighted the opportunities created by CETA, including in niche areas such as high-end technology, green energy and ocean energy; tenders for new hospitals; and opportunities with respect to airport and subway infrastructure and housing.

The Ambassador also responded to questions about Ireland's low corporate tax rate (12.5%), which has been a principal factor in a number of multinational companies establishing themselves in the country. Although this rate is contentious within the European Union (EU), Ireland has no intention of modifying its policy and actively promotes the rate. Mr. Roxburgh added that it is not the corporate tax rate alone that attracts companies – Ireland also has a skilled workforce that is attractive to businesses.

On the issue of Brexit, Ambassador Vickers highlighted the complexity of the issues facing the (EU) and the U.K., particularly with respect to the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Many issues remain to be resolved and compromise is difficult. U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May hopes to find technological solutions and has made comparisons to the Canada-United States border, but commentators note that this seems unrealistic given the frequent backlogs at the Canada-U.S. border. The EU's position is that if no alternative solution can be found then there will be no other option but a hard border between Northern Ireland and the U.K. in order for Northern Ireland to maintain regulatory alignment with the EU. Ambassador Vickers commented that if Northern Ireland were to ultimately hold a referendum on the issue of unifying with Ireland, the vote would be divided on sectarian lines. Ms. Ellis commented that fear of political instability in the U.K. has been amplified by the Brexit debate.

The delegation also discussed a number of social issues, including the coming referendum on the issue of abortion in Ireland. The Ambassador also noted that housing affordability and availability are of significant concern in Ireland. The briefing closed with a discussion of the Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance and the good relationship between Canada and Ireland in this regard.

Meeting with the Ireland Canada Business Association

The delegation then attended a meeting with members of the Ireland Canada Business Association, hosted by law firm Eversheds Sutherland. One of the broad themes of discussion was the strong links between Canada and Ireland, including cultural affinities, similar language and legal systems, and industry linkages.

Alan Connell of Eversheds Sutherland highlighted the fact that Ireland markets itself as a “gateway to Europe” for companies who wish to take advantage of the country's low corporate tax rate and young, educated work force. While the Irish economy has until recently been strongly linked to the presence of American firms in the country, Canadian companies are now establishing themselves in Dublin and elsewhere. Gerard Ryan of Eversheds Sutherland noted that Ireland's use of the common law legal system means that there is less red tape surrounding regulatory processes than in civil law jurisdictions.

Mr. Ryan also highlighted the opportunities presented by CETA. He noted that in addition to opportunities in financial services, food, construction and agritech industries,

the opening of the public procurement market at the federal and provincial levels in Canada is also of great interest to Irish companies. Angelyn Rowan, also of Eversheds Sutherland, highlighted the great potential benefits of the single public tender portal, commenting on the enhanced transparency that this portal will bring for companies bidding on projects, although recognizing that it is not a carte blanche for European companies to enter the Canadian procurement market. She also commented that the elimination of tariffs on building materials is very important for the construction industry in Ireland. The importance of labour mobility was also highlighted, with a discussion of foreign credential recognition, particularly in Canada's federal-provincial context.

Marie McGinley of Eversheds Sutherland also raised the issue of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will come into effect on 25 May 2018, creating uniformity for data protection rules throughout the EU. Countries dealing with the EU will need to be GDPR compliant. Canada is currently well positioned in this respect, as it has been deemed by the European Commission to offer an adequate level of data protection, allowing for the free flow of data between the jurisdictions (which is not the case in the U.S.). Mr. Roxburgh noted that Canadian companies will likely quickly adapt to the new reporting and compliance requirements. Ms. McGinley also highlighted the benefits of Ireland having a Data Protection Commissioner, who has an open-door policy for companies with questions about their obligations.

On the issue of Brexit, Aidan Byrne of RSM Ireland noted that the EU's position seems to be fairly clear – it is eager to get on with business. Prime Minister May wants to find a compromise that will see the U.K. leave the customs union and the single market but have a trade deal in place. He commented that although Prime Minister May hopes to find a technological solution for the Irish border, that option is not necessarily realistic in the short term. Mr. Ryan also reiterated the fact that if Brexit ends with an unmanaged “no deal,” then World Trade Organization rules will apply. The situation is made more difficult because the Good Friday Agreement creates a baseline for future relations between Ireland and Northern Ireland that has international implications. Chris Morash of Trinity College Dublin also noted the implications of Brexit on research. Currently 60% of research funding comes from the EU, and such funding has a multiplier effect on the economy. Irish universities will gain prominence after Brexit, as among the only English language universities that remain in the EU. He noted that Brexit may be disruptive, but that it also presents an opportunity for Canadian and Irish researchers. Chris Collenette of law firm Philip Lee closed the meeting, emphasizing that the confusion surrounding Brexit is an opportunity for Ireland in many ways – it is a good location for companies to invest in terms of political and economic stability, corporate tax rates and physical scale.

Meeting with the Institute of International and European Affairs

The first day of the mission closed in a meeting with representatives from the Institute of International and European Affairs. Barry Andrews, Director General, began by discussing the future of the EU-U.K. relationship. He commented that the U.K. has always had a somewhat detached relationship within the EU, so its departure is likely to be manageable. However, Ireland will be one of the most affected member states. Francis Jacobs, former Head of the European Parliament's Information Office in Ireland,

commented that the U.K. has nevertheless always been an influential member of the EU, generally adopting a position that pushed for enlargement rather than deepening relations. As such, Brexit will bring a shift in the balance of power within the EU – the U.K. will no longer be there to serve as a counterweight to France and Germany.

On the issue of Ireland's relationship with the EU, Blair Horan, former Secretary General of the Civil and Public Services Union, commented that joining the EU was very important for Ireland. The country had been very dependent on the U.K., but found economic independence after joining the Union, assisted by programs such as the Common Agricultural Policy. Mr. Jacobs followed up by commenting that joining the EU also led to greatly increased political sovereignty for Ireland.

Turning to the future of the EU, Mr. Andrews noted that euroskepticism is still alive and well and will likely manifest itself in the coming 2019 European Parliament elections. On the issue of the deepening and enlargement of the EU, Mr. Jacobs commented that the next enlargement is tentatively planned for 2025 if the Balkan nations can meet the criteria set out for them. However, enlargement fatigue is a reality. The last expansion brought 13 countries into the EU in a short period of time – some of them with culturally conservative values and others that are still dealing with issues of corruption and poverty.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of Canada's immigration policies, including its welcoming of Syrian migrants and the recent flow of irregular migration from the U.S.

Meeting and Tour of Irving Oil

On 6 March, the CAEU delegation travelled to County Cork, accompanied by Ms. Ellis and Mr. Roxburgh, and began its day in a meeting with representatives at Irving Oil's Whitegate refinery. Jeff Matthews, Chief Business Development Officer, provided the delegation with a history of the Canadian company and an overview of its operations. The Whitegate refinery is Ireland's only refinery, supplying 40% of Ireland's energy needs (one-third of the energy produced at Whitegate is used in the country). Irving Oil bought the refinery in 2016. For the moment, the company is involved only in the wholesale market in Ireland – it has no retail presence, unlike in Canada.

David Austin, General Manager of the refinery, explained the company's response to the global move towards reduction of greenhouse gases. He outlined the shift to renewable diesel and blending ethanol and gasoline, emphasizing the importance of regulatory certainty so that companies know in what direction to focus their research and development. Mr. Matthews followed up on this point, noting that one of the other ways that the company has responded to the move towards greener energy is by installing electric vehicle charging stations at gas stations in Canada. He commented that oil refineries are a necessary reality, and that Irving is attempting to operate and develop in the cleanest and best way possible. He also emphasized the community outreach initiatives that Irving is undertaking in the Whitegate community.

Todd Underhill, Director of Business Integration, finished the meeting by describing the process used to transform crude oil into different products at the refinery. The delegation was then given a tour of the Whitegate refinery.

Meeting with the Cork Chamber of Commerce

The delegation then met Katherine Fitzpatrick, International Relations Manager, and Thomas McHugh, Director of Policy and External Relations, at the Cork Chamber of Commerce. Mr. McHugh provided the delegation with an overview of the work of the Chamber of Commerce and noted the positive developments in Ireland and in County Cork since the 2008 financial crisis. Instead of overreliance on the construction industry and fiscal rules for loans and investments, today, spatial development is linked to economic development. Construction is following the economy rather than driving it. Ultimately, construction is following population growth and development is based on scale and is being consolidated around metropolises. The government's Project Ireland 2040 outlines growth objectives for the country, with Cork as one centre of scale (Cork and its suburbs are expected to grow by 50% by 2040). As part of this plan, capital is being invested to ensure that the infrastructure (including roadways) is in place to support that development. The Cork airport will be opening to the U.S. East coast soon, and there are hopes that a Canadian link will also be developed. As such, the Cork Chamber of Commerce's priorities focus on infrastructure, housing, education and skills, creating a thriving city centre, broadening Cork's sectoral footprint, focussing on the Cork airport, marketing for the Cork region, and Brexit.

With respect to the latter, Mr. McHugh expressed some concern of the disproportionate effect that Brexit will have on Ireland. However, he said that Ireland has some important attributes to sell – membership in the Eurozone, use of the English language, stability, and commitment to the 12.5% corporate tax rate being just a few.

Ms. Fitzpatrick then presented initiatives that the Chamber of Commerce is undertaking with respect to branding and marketing the region. The goal is to raise awareness of Cork as a location for investment, reaching out to embassies and to the Irish diaspora. She noted that there are some positive side effects to Brexit – international students are increasingly turning to Ireland instead of the U.K., and some companies may move their headquarters to Ireland to remain within the EU. She noted that Cork is becoming a hub for cybersecurity companies. Fifteen such companies are now established in the area and it has become important to ensure that local university programs are producing graduates with the appropriate skills to work in these companies.

Meeting with eSentire

The day closed with a meeting at eSentire, a Canadian cybersecurity service with its European Security Operations Center (SOC) in Cork. Eldon Sprickerhoff, Founder and Chief Security Strategist, told the delegation that the company chose to establish itself in Cork because of the city's small town aura and the relevant and skilled talent emerging from local universities. The Cork office opened in 2015 and has 20 employees.

Mr. Sprickerhoff provided the delegation with an overview of cybersecurity threats facing companies and the operations of eSentire. With the growth of cybercriminality, custom ransomware and cryptocurrencies, he said that 100% prevention is not realistic; as such, eSentire focuses on managed detection and response. Ciaran Luttrell, Manager,

SOC Operations followed up by explaining that real-time monitoring is eSentire's primary task – with analysts who monitor and analyze traffic and raise alert when a situation might need escalating, and senior analysts who undertake complex digs and forensic analysis of potential hacks, and communicate with clients. Mr. Sprickerhoff said that eSentire's clients tend to be in the health care, legal services and manufacturing sectors. He noted that most companies do not think that they need cybersecurity services or do not have the resources to pay for such services, commenting that even the Canadian government may not be taking full advantage of the protection that cybersecurity companies can offer.

On the issue of data protection, Mr. Sprickerhoff highlighted the fact that Canada has stronger data protection laws than the U.S. but expressed concerns about the lack of regulations ensuring that disclosure is promptly made when companies lose data. He said that Canada's *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* lacks teeth and noted that the EU's GDPR that comes into force in May will include onerous rules about what companies can do with data, accompanied by significant fines for violations of those rules.

Meeting with the Irish Business and Employers Confederation

On 7 March, the CAEU and RUUK delegations joined for the remainder of the week's program, and began the day in a meeting with the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC). Fergal O'Brien, Director of Policy and Chief Economist, began the discussion with an overview of IBEC's work as an employer service organization, representing 70% of Ireland's private sector workforce from seven regional offices. Joanne Reynolds, Brexit Campaign Officer, then presented IBEC's strategic campaign for 2018, *Ireland: A Model of Substance*, which focuses on presenting Ireland as a strong economy that is built on real substance, unlike the situation that led to the 2008 financial crisis.

Mr. O'Brien commented that Ireland's economy is thriving – it managed to recover quickly from the financial crisis (within two years the country reached record levels of exports) and today its open economy is benefitting from the booming global economy. In terms of investment, the country still has a strong industrial basis, but is increasingly focused on innovation. He noted that local investment, construction and infrastructure took longer to recover after the financial crisis, while the rest of the economy grew; this difference has led to a lack of housing in the country generally, and affordable accommodation in particular. Moving forward, there will be an ambitious period of public investment (€10 billion over 10 years), representing 4% of economic activity. Danny McCoy, CEO, noted that private sector investment is very important in Ireland – even during the recession. He noted that some observers have expressed skepticism with respect to Ireland's impressive GDP per capita, but that there is real substance behind those numbers. He also countered concern about Ireland's low corporate tax rate by noting that Ireland is following OECD rules in this respect. Mr. O'Brien followed on this, commenting that economic stability is crucial to promoting Ireland as a destination for investment and that this is exemplified by the country's commitment to maintaining its corporate tax rate.

Presenters all noted that IBEC is very engaged on the issue of Brexit. Mr. McCoy commented that the business voice has been relatively absent from Brexit discussions, and IBEC has been trying to make sure that the Irish business community's voice is heard. Ms. Reynolds said that IBEC is emphasizing the need to focus on practical solutions during withdrawal negotiations to mitigate damage while also looking at contingency planning to ensure that potential impacts on different sectors are not ignored. Mr. McCoy emphasized that Ireland will suffer following Brexit unless negotiations can be extended. The country also needs to work to maintain goodwill from other EU member states. Although there is full political alignment between Ireland and the EU as a whole, there is resentment by some in the EU business community with respect to Ireland's booming economy. He expressed frustration at Prime Minister May's regular references to the "Irish" border question, which seem to distance the U.K. from the equation. He also emphasized that all individuals born in Northern Ireland can receive both U.K. and EU citizenship.

With respect to labour and environmental issues, Mr. O'Brien emphasized the country's skilled talent pool, while Mr. McCoy noted that 15% to 20% of Ireland's labour market is non-Irish and non-British. He also commented that because of Ireland's significant population growth, it is very unlikely to meet its climate change targets. Ireland's economic objectives are likely to take precedence over environmental concerns in the short term.

Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister

The delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Vickers, then met with Simon Coveney, Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste) and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Tánaiste Coveney highlighted the close historical relations between Canada and Ireland that have deepened in recent months with the implementation of CETA. A number of Canadian companies are investing in Ireland and soon Irish financial services and agri-food companies will hopefully be investing in Canada. Ireland will also be opening a large consulate in Vancouver to serve the Irish population on the Canadian West coast.

Tánaiste Coveney, who is tasked with coordinating Ireland's negotiating strategy with respect to Brexit, provided the delegation with an overview of Phases 1 and 2 of those negotiations. The issue of the border is important – the Common Travel Area has existed since the 1920s, with recognition of dual citizenship for those born in Northern Ireland. Tánaiste Coveney emphasized that Common Travel Area must be maintained. The border is now invisible and it must stay that way both for trade and peace purposes – there must be no physical infrastructure at the border or checks elsewhere. The border was a contentious issue during Phase 1 of the negotiations, but an agreement was reached and various options on how to move forward have been incorporated into the EU's legal text of that draft agreement: Option A looks to a future relationship to manage the border; Option B looks to bespoke technological solutions; and Option C is the fallback position, stating that Northern Ireland will remain a part of the customs union with full alignment with the EU if no other agreement can be found. The border issue has forced everyone to closely consider the reality of Brexit.

Tánaiste Coveney noted that although the EU may not need the U.K., Ireland does in many ways. The U.K. was the chief architect of the single market, it is a voice for open markets, it generally mirrors Ireland's views on taxation, and it has advocated for a union of sovereign states instead of a federalist model for the EU. Ireland agrees with these approaches, so will now have to work hard to build alliances with other states to support these positions. Ultimately, the U.K., the EU and Ireland will suffer if there is a hard Brexit – Brexit represents the values of a different era when states were fully sovereign and did not need others.

Meeting with the Ireland-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group

Following a brief tour of the Irish Parliament (Oireachtas), the delegation met with the Ireland-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group. The conversation focused in large part on CETA, with some Irish parliamentarians noting the important recent decision of the European Court of Justice, which held that the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* did not allow the arbitration provisions contained in a bilateral investment treaty between Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands. This case may have implications for the Belgian case that has been referred to the Court with respect to the investment court system provisions in CETA. The Irish parliamentarians expressed enthusiasm about CETA generally, but a number had reservations about the proposed investment court system, which is not yet in force. They emphasized the need to trust national courts in this context and noted that Ireland may not ratify CETA until the European Court of Justice has issued its ruling on the matter. Conversation also focused on recent increased trade between Canada and Ireland, including the importance of tourism and improved air carrier connections between the countries.

The conversation also touched on professional accreditation for Canadian students who train as doctors in Ireland; migration and gender equality policies in Canada; and the implications that Brexit may have on fisheries.

Meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence

The delegation then met with members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, including Vice Chair Maureen O'Sullivan, Teachtaí Dála (T.D., member of the Irish legislature); Seán Barrett, T.D.; Noel Grealish, T.D.; and Tony McLoughlin, T.D.. The discussion began with an exchange on Ireland's military neutrality and the respect that the country has earned for its peacekeeping initiatives as a result of this approach. It was noted that Ireland is taking part in the EU's recent Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative, and some participants expressed concerns that such membership compromised Ireland's neutrality. Flowing from this topic, Ms. O'Sullivan also mentioned Ireland's approach to international work, highlighting that Ireland's international development assistance comes with no strings attached.

On the issue of Brexit, committee members expressed concern about the uncertainty surrounding the border question. Any real border will have a significant impact on Irish industries and trade, however it is difficult to see how a hard border can ultimately be

avoided. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, Ms. O'Sullivan noted that Brexit also represents an opportunity for Ireland to diversify its trade channels.

Discussion also turned to the current political stalemate in the Northern Ireland Assembly that seems to centre on the issue of official recognition of the Irish language, with some members fearing that the language issue is being used as a political card.

Meeting with the Minister of State for the Diaspora

The delegation's final meeting of the day was with Ciarán Cannon, Minister of State for the Diaspora. Minister Cannon began by describing the breadth and scope of the Irish diaspora in Canada and around the world – one in nine Canadians claim Irish ancestry. As such, the Irish government devotes resources to supporting Irish communities around the world, including through a grant aid scheme that focuses mainly on the Irish diaspora in the U.K., the U.S., and Canada, with particular emphasis on welfare assistance for the aging diaspora. The minister also noted the consulate that will soon be opening in Vancouver.

Because many emigrants do not engage with Irish culture beyond identifying themselves as Irish-American or Irish-Canadian, one of the minister's areas of priority is to strengthen links with the Irish diaspora through digital media, culture, sport, the twinning of cities, enhanced business links, and scholarships such as the Flaherty Scholarship offered through the Ireland Canada University Foundation. Co-funded by the Canadian and Irish governments, this scholarship allows Canadian and Irish students to study in each other's countries, with the goal of creating life-long affinities for the other culture. As the third most important industry in the Irish economy, the minister also spoke positively about the tourism generated by individuals of Irish heritage who come to the country to learn more about their historical roots. Minister Cannon echoed Prime Minister Varadkar's words by noting that the idea is to promote a "global Irish nation" that supports a two-way relationship with the Irish diaspora.

Reception hosted by the Embassy

The delegation's mission to Ireland closed with a reception at Ambassador Vickers' residence, where delegates continued conversations with many of the individuals that they had met throughout the mission, as well as some who had been unable to attend the meetings over the previous days. Mr. Maloney, head of delegation and Chair of the Canada-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group, made a speech thanking the Ambassador and his team and highlighting the delegation's experiences during its three days in Ireland, as well as the importance of Canadian-Irish relations.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO NORTHERN IRELAND (8 TO 9 MARCH 2018)

Travel from Dublin, Ireland to Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

The delegation travelled by bus from Dublin to Belfast for the opportunity to cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Members noted that the openness of the border was comparable to Canada's interprovincial boundaries. Upon arriving in Belfast, members were taken on a bus tour of the area of the city that still reflects the sectarian

tensions that was the source of considerable violence over many years until the end of the “Troubles” in 1998.

Working Lunch with Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly

A formal working lunch was held for the delegation at Stormont Estate hosted by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Robin Newtown (Democratic Unionist Party, DUP) and attended by a number of other members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs) representing a variety of political parties.

Speaker Newton, the DUP MLA from East Belfast, welcomed the delegation and offered some introductory remarks after which he invited his fellow MLAs to introduce themselves and offer a few words.

Roy Beggs, the Ulster Unionist Party MLA from East Antrim, described some of the essentials of Brexit. He explained that Northern Ireland will work in partnership with Westminster and the devolved legislatures in the Brexit negotiations despite the fact that the majority of voters in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU in the June 2016 referendum. While he stated that the U.K. will be leaving the EU regardless of the hurdles that lay ahead, he expressed concern that Ireland had shown some reluctance to discuss options for respecting the Good Friday Agreement while also ensuring minimal disruptions at the Irish border.

Caoimhe Archibald, the Sinn Féin MLA for East Londonderry, provided her party’s perspective on Brexit. The delegation heard that Sinn Féin had campaigned for the “remain” side in Brexit and that the party position now that the U.K. will leave the EU is that it would like Northern Ireland to receive special attention during Brexit negotiations as well as a continuation of no border controls at the Irish border. This outcome may require negotiation of a special status for Northern Ireland. She suggested that Brexit may bring about greater unity on the Island of Ireland. Ms. Archibald emphasized the importance of reinstating the Northern Ireland Assembly with a shared Executive so that Brexit discussions can continue in the legislature.

Stephen Farry, the Alliance Party MLA for North Down, explained that his party also campaigned to remain in the EU. However, contrary to Ms. Archibald’s view, Mr. Farry voiced concerns that the decision to leave the EU could result in a worsening of the polarized views in Northern Ireland, leading to new divisions and ultimately harming the fragile peace on the Island. Similar to Ms. Archibald, Mr. Farry emphasized that Brexit negotiations must include a special situation, or status, for Northern Ireland.

Edwin Poots, the DUP MLA for Lagan Valley, expressed strong support for leaving the EU in part because of what he suggested is over-regulation of the agriculture sector under EU rules. He told delegates that Europe-wide regulations are not relevant in all jurisdictions and that some politics are best left to local authorities. Mr. Poots stated that it is his hope that the U.K. is a strong negotiator in the Brexit talks with the EU and that he is optimistic about entering into new free trade agreements, including one with Canada.

Finally, Claire Hanna, the Social Democratic and Labour Party MLA from South Belfast, voiced strong opposition to the U.K. leaving the EU and pessimism about Northern

Ireland's ability to contribute and be heard in the Brexit negotiations. She listed her party's preferences for negotiation outcomes as 1) no Brexit, possibly by holding another referendum; 2) U.K. remains in the customs union; and 3) special status for Northern Ireland.

Despite the range of opinions and outlooks, all MLAs agreed that there can be no change to the soft border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and that any form of border controls could trigger a resurgence of sectarian tensions on the Island. While some of the speakers acknowledged that there is general agreement between the U.K. and the EU that in the event of "no deal," the Irish border would remain unchanged, some MLAs felt that the language in the negotiated agreement is ambiguous and that a firmer guarantee is necessary. When asked whether re-unification of the Island of Ireland had become a possibility, delegates were told by Mr. Beggs that the issue is not up for discussion.

Briefing from Representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive

The delegation attended a briefing at Stormont Castle, which houses the offices and meeting rooms for the Northern Ireland Executive, with Mr. Neill Jackson, Director of Executive Services, and Mr. David Patterson, lead on Brexit policy. Mr. Jackson provided a brief overview of Northern Ireland's governance evolution from 1921 through to the signing in 1998 of the Good Friday Agreement. He described the three "strands" of the agreement:

- Strand One sets out the power sharing-structure of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive
- Strand Two addresses the north-south relationship of the Island of Ireland by establishing institutions such as the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC), and
- Strand Three addresses the east-west relationship with the Island of Great Britain by establishing institutions including the British-Irish Council.

He described the Northern Ireland Assembly's power-sharing governance structure established in 1998 and noted that the Assembly has been disrupted for several of the past 20 years because of difficulty in agreeing on the sharing of power. In particular, he noted that the Assembly was under the direct rule of Westminster between 2002 and 2007. After relative stability in the Northern Ireland Assembly from 2007 until 2014, there has been considerable dysfunction since that time. The Assembly has not been able to reach a power-sharing agreement since the March 2017 general election.

Meeting and Tour of Bombardier Aerospace

The final meeting of the day involved a presentation by officials at Bombardier Aerospace's facility in Belfast followed by a tour of the C Series factory plant. Ms. Haley Dunne, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, provided a brief overview of Bombardier's history and current business activities. Delegates heard that the company, whose headquarters are in Montréal, pursues activities in the areas of

aerospace as well as land transportation innovation and manufacturing. The aerospace business line includes business and commercial aircraft as well as aerostructures and engineering services. The Belfast facility is within Bombardier's Aerostructures and engineering services and it is the largest manufacturing facility in the city, employing 4,000 people. The company has sister sites in Montréal; Dallas, Texas; and Casablanca, Morocco. These facilities specialize in the design and manufacture of complex metallic and composite aircraft structures and system components including fuselages, engine nacelles, wings, bulkheads, doors and horizontal stabilizers.

Ms. Haley stated that Bombardier's position with respect to Brexit is the position of the aerospace industry; that while there are uncertainties for which contingencies cannot be planned, its hopes that there will be no changes from a business and trade perspective.

The delegation toured the manufacturing plant that produces the C Series wing. Ms. Haley explained that Bombardier's C Series aircraft will address an underserved market: passenger airplanes with a capacity of 100-150 seats. She provided delegates with an overview of the recent American International Trade Commission decision in Bombardier's favour and outlined the partnership agreement that Bombardier has entered into with Airbus. Delegates were told that although Airbus owns the C Series aircraft, Bombardier is its supplier and holds the intellectual property rights for some manufacturing aspects of the C Series aircraft including the composite carbon fibre with resin used in the wing.

Meeting with Canada's Honorary Consul in Belfast

The delegation began its last day in Belfast at a breakfast meeting with Mr. Ken Brundle, Canada's Honorary Consul in Belfast. The conversation was wide ranging – Mr. Brundle touched on the political stalemate in Northern Ireland and the prospects for its resolution, commenting on the potential benefits of an outside facilitator, or an advisory civil forum. With respect to political tensions in everyday life, he noted that despite the possibility of political problems easily spilling out into the streets, such tensions are very localized. Although the peace walls and gates are still present in one part of the city, and about which delegates expressed concern during the tour of the city, he emphasized that the people who live in those communities want the gates closed in the evening as that makes them more comfortable.

With respect to Brexit and economic indicators in Northern Ireland, Mr. Brundle highlighted the potential negative effects that Brexit may have on salaries in Northern Ireland as a result of currency fluctuation. He also noted the gap between Northern Ireland's relatively low unemployment rate and the relatively low proportion of the working-age population that is engaged in the workforce. He emphasized the fact that 60% of employment in Northern Ireland is in the public service, thus there is no real economic generator for the region.

Turning to Canada's presence in Northern Ireland, Mr. Brundle lamented the fact that there are no longer any direct flights from Canada to Belfast, and also highlighted the difficulties that arose when Canada's Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) was introduced because few travellers understood how to fill out the forms.

Meeting with the North South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council

The delegation then met with representatives from the North South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council at Stormont Castle. Donal Moran, Deputy Joint Secretary (Northern Ireland), and Emer McGeough, Sectoral Manager of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, provided delegates with an overview of the work of the NSMC, which was born of the second strand of the Good Friday Agreement focussing on North-South relations. The NSMC acts as a forum for meetings between the ministers of Ireland and Northern Ireland in 12 listed areas of cooperation. In terms of structure, ministers meet in a plenary twice a year, sectoral meetings are held with relevant ministers on specific areas under discussion, and institutional meetings are also held with the ministers of foreign affairs on an as-needed basis.

Ms. McGeough went on to describe the six areas of cooperation: health (such as dealing with alcohol and tobacco use, pediatric cardiac services, and cancer research), education (such as an autism centre of excellence and youth and teacher exchanges), agriculture (such as farm safety, animal health and the Common Agricultural Policy), environment (such as dumping in the border area, as well as climate change), transport (focussing on road, rail and cycling networks) and tourism (marketing Ireland as an island); and the six implementation bodies that focus on languages, special EU programmes, trade, aquaculture and tourism, inland navigable waterways, and food safety.

Mr. Moran commented that there has been very good engagement at the NSMC, with strong personal relationships developed among the two executives, and listed the various agreements that have been reached since 1999. However, he noted that the Brexit referendum entirely changed the political landscape. Nevertheless, Ms. McGeough commented that there is a great desire on the part of officials to work closely together. She noted that the situation is so much better than it was 30 years ago and emphasized that economic prosperity has been key to peace.

Tereasa Bell and Jerry O'Donovan of the Joint Secretary of the British-Irish Council (BIC) then provided an overview of their institution, which was born of the third strand of the Good Friday Agreement focussing on East-West relations. The BIC is made up of representatives of the Irish, U.K., Scottish, Northern Ireland, Welsh, Jersey and Guernsey, and Isle of Man governments. The heads of government meet at a summit held twice a year, with other meetings also held at the ministerial and official levels. The BIC has 11 areas of focus: social inclusion, energy, indigenous and minority languages, housing, environment, misuse of substance, digital inclusion, early years policy, transport, creative industries, and spatial planning.

A conversation ensued with delegates that touched on climate change policy, food safety regulations, the future of the Good Friday Agreement, and the impact of Brexit on fisheries policy and education.

Meeting with the Lord Mayor of Belfast

The delegation then met with the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Naula McAllister. The Lord Mayor provided delegates with an overview of the rotational mayor

election process in Belfast, which is based on the D'Hondt system. As a representative of the third ranked Alliance Party, the Lord Mayor emphasized the importance that she and her party put on evidence-driven policy making. Providing delegates with her perspective on the issues facing Northern Ireland and Belfast, she noted that Belfast has seen a shift from the manufacturing industry to the digital sector, commenting that Belfast is now the most important region for cybersecurity investment outside the U.S. There is an enormous amount of construction happening in Belfast at the moment – this is a new phenomenon for the city. The Lord Mayor also touched on social issues, such as homelessness (noting that the waiting list for public housing is allocated based on nationalist or unionist allegiances), the situation for members of LGBTQ communities and women's rights in Northern Ireland.

Meeting with Invest Northern Ireland

The delegation's last meeting in Belfast was with representatives from Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI). Alan Wilson, Head of International Investment, began with an overview of Invest NI's key messages, highlighting Northern Ireland as a region with a history of attracting innovative companies, with a great education system that produces skilled talent and that is cost competitive for investors. Northern Ireland has no need to market a low corporate tax rate – he said that it is simply a great place to invest.

Mr. Wilson commented that 95% of the region's graduates stay in Northern Ireland, and Shelley Pinkerton, Head of International Trade-Americas, highlighted the fact that Northern Ireland has the fastest growing population in the U.K. and is one of the youngest populations in Europe. She noted that Northern Ireland has a small business-focused economy and is seeking to increase exports as this generates income that leads to increased domestic spending. She described the key trade challenges that Invest NI helps businesses to overcome, highlighting the time and resources that it takes to enter new and multiple markets.

Paul McCoy, International Investment Manager, outlined Invest NI's focus on foreign direct investment, emphasizing that the organization's job is to highlight the specific benefits of investing in Northern Ireland, as most investors are more familiar with Ireland. Following up on comments made by Mr. Wilson, he said that these benefits include skilled talent, a good legal system, competitive costs, cutting edge research, a breadth of opportunities, and being part of a global trading zone. There has been a great deal of job creation in Northern Ireland over the last year, focussing on the financial services and technology sectors. Invest NI tries to look for best matches on a granular level – in particular, focussing on product development-oriented companies rather than service-based industries. Delegates were told that Belfast is fast becoming the number one location for North American cybersecurity firms, and Queen's University's Centre for Cybersecurity adds value in this regard. Mr. McCoy echoed Mr. Wilson's comments on the issue of cost effectiveness, noting that, with a median salary of £21,000, Belfast is almost 30% more cost effective than Dublin, almost 45% more cost effective than London, and over 55% more cost effective than New York City with respect to labour costs. He said that there is a perception of wealth in Belfast because the cost of living remains low – the region is not seeing the rapid rise in housing costs that leads salaries to rise in tandem. However, housing availability is limited in the city.

In response to questions about CETA, Ms. Pinkerton noted that tariff reduction is seen as very beneficial in Northern Ireland and that there has been an upswing in trade missions since the deal went into effect. However, Northern Ireland's smaller businesses are not necessarily thinking about engaging in trade, and Invest NI is trying to encourage this avenue. Ultimately, the organization is hoping for a future trade deal that will encourage investment between Canada and the U.K., and sees Northern Ireland as a gateway to both the U.K. and the EU. Mr. McCoy noted that both Brexit and political instability in Northern Ireland have led to uncertainty, which does not sit well with investors. But generally, Northern Ireland is weathering the storm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Scott Simms, MP
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association	
ACTIVITY	Mission to Ireland and Northern Ireland, United Kingdom	
DESTINATION	Dublin and Cork, Ireland and Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom and Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom	
DATES	5-9 March, 2018	
DELEGATION		
SENATE	Hon. René Cormier, Senator David Wells, Senator	Hon.
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. James Maloney, M.P. and Head of the delegation Mr. Scott Simms, M.P. Mr. Ziad Aboultaif, M.P. Ms. Irene Mathyssen, M.P.	
STAFF	Ms. Guyanne Desforges, Association Secretary Ms. Laura Barnett, Association Advisor	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 15,093.45	
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 12,662.14	
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00	
PER DIEMS	\$ 7,327.37	
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 531.41	
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00	
TOTAL	\$ 35,614.37	