

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

Washington, D.C., United States of America

From April 25 to 26, 2023

Report

INTRODUCTION

Mr. James Maloney, Member of Parliament (MP) for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, and Mr. Bob Zimmer, MP for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, represented the Canadian Parliament at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR or Arctic Parliamentarians)¹ held in Washington, D.C., United States (U.S.) on 25 and 26 April 2023 (see the full list of participants in Annex 1). Accompanying Mr. Maloney and Mr. Zimmer was Mrs. Daniele Lafrance, from the Parliamentary Information, Education and Research Services of the Library of Parliament as an adviser.

Arctic parliamentary cooperation is facilitated by SCPAR meetings that occur between biennial meetings of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR). SCPAR meetings and CPAR act as a parliamentary forum for issues relevant to the work of the Arctic Council. The forum comprises delegations from the eight Arctic parliaments (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the U.S.) and the European Parliament. However, no delegates from Russia were invited to participate in this meeting. SCPAR meetings and CPAR also include permanent participants representing Arctic Indigenous peoples, as well as observers.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIR AAJA CHEMNITZ LARSEN AND STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION GENERAL BUSINESS

In her opening remarks, Chair Aaja Chemnitz Larsen, MP for Greenland, Parliament of Denmark (the Folketing), noted that it is a busy time for Arctic Parliamentarians and that she spends about 30% of her time representing SCPAR at events and meetings, for example to fulfil her duties as a board member of UArctic.² She explained that because Arctic organizations are often small, in her view, it is important to increase collaboration, which has been a focus as her time as Chair. For example, SCPAR recently entered into a collaboration agreement with the West Nordic Council and is exploring such an agreement with the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

A discussion regarding how to increase SCPAR's political influence took place. In Chair Chemnitz Larsen's view, more permanent funding for the Chair of SCPAR to attend events would be helpful. She argued that expanding the number of parliamentarians from Arctic States who can participate in meetings as observers could help broaden SCPAR's reach. These topics will be included in the agenda of the next meeting for further discussion.

¹ The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, [Conferences](#).

² UArctic "is a network of universities, colleges, research institutes, and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North." See UArctic, [About Us](#).

UNITED STATES' PRESENTATION ON THE ARCTIC

Information on the State of Alaska, U.S., was presented to delegates. Vice-Chair Lisa Murkowski, Senator for Alaska, U.S., began by discussing the U.S.'s challenges as they pertain to the Arctic. These include:

- the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, food security and the possible need to relocate communities in future as a result of these impacts;
- an out-migration of young people away from the Arctic;
- a slow economic rebound post-COVID;
- housing concerns; and
- mental and physical health infrastructure, with acute concerns such as an increase in tuberculosis cases.

However, Senator Murkowski also spoke optimistically about 2020 energy legislation,³ which would authorize funds for cleaner/renewable sources of energy; 2022 infrastructure legislation,⁴ which had a special focus on rural communities, such as for water and sanitation systems; and investments made towards building an Arctic deep-water port in Nome, Alaska. The construction of two polar icebreakers has also recently been approved.

The October 2022 U.S. National Strategy for the Arctic Region (U.S. Strategy) was presented by Ambassador David Balton, Senior Fellow at Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, and Mike Sfraga, Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission. The U.S. Strategy rests on four pillars: security; climate change and environmental protection; sustainable economic development; and international cooperation and governance. They also presented the U.S. Arctic Research Commission Report on the Goals and Objectives for Arctic Research 2023–2024,⁵ describing it as actionable research that informs policy.

During the ensuing discussion, Mr. Zimmer spoke of Arctic sovereignty as a common challenge among Arctic States. He also stressed the importance of bringing awareness to all Canadians (especially those living in more southern areas) of the importance of the Arctic. Mr. Maloney noted that Canada's Arctic region faces very similar challenges to those described by Senator Murkowski and that the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency has helped fund projects in the Arctic, such as those for renewable energy infrastructure.

ARCTIC FIRST PEOPLES

Delegates representing the Aleut International Association (O. Patricia Lekanoff Gregory, Vice-President), the Arctic Athabaskan Council (Chief Gary Harrison), the Gwich'in

³ United States, Congress, [Clean Energy Innovation and Deployment Act of 2020](#), H.R.7516, 116th Congress, 2nd Session.

⁴ United States, [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#), Public Law 117-58, 117th Congress, 135 Stat. 429.

⁵ United States Arctic Research Commission, [Report on the Goals and Objectives for Arctic Research 2023–2024 for the US Arctic Research Program Plan](#), January 2023.

Council (Edward Alexander, Board Co-Chair), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Sara Olsvig, International Chair) and the Saami Council (Hakon Jonsson, President) provided updates.

Many of the Arctic Indigenous Organizations included the importance of the continuation of the Arctic Council's work and the effort of its working groups in their updates. Food insecurity continues to be a great concern in many regions. Decreasing the reliance on diesel for electricity generation was also a priority for many Arctic Indigenous organizations; transitioning towards more sustainable alternatives, such as geothermal and wind, is being explored in many areas. The fires in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge and the impact these fires are having on the Boreal Forest was also raised.

THE FUTURE OF THE ARCTIC: A DISCUSSION

Delegates discussed the transition of the Arctic Council's chairship from Russia to Norway on 11 May 2023. Delegates then spoke about the possible functioning of the Arctic Council and of SCPAR in the future. The need for continued collaboration was noted as important, although collaboration at the political level continues to be challenging. A bottom-up approach was therefore suggested; collaboration between researchers can help ensure data is shared and important scientific work continues to take place across the Arctic. It was agreed that the Chair would draft correspondence to the governments of Arctic countries or to the Arctic Council that would present this approach as a way forward.

CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION IN SWEDEN

It was agreed that the next CPAR will be hosted by the Parliament of Sweden and will take place in Kiruna, Sweden, 20–22 March 2024. Tentative discussion themes included security and preparedness (e.g., food security), business and employment, and research and education.

NEXT MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

It was agreed that the next SCPAR meeting will be hosted by the Parliament of Iceland in Egilsstaðir, Iceland, 16–18 October 2023, and that delegates may wish to attend the Arctic Circle Assembly,⁶ which will be held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 19–22 October 2023. Renewable energy will be the theme for this meeting.

PANEL: COOPERATION IN A CHANGING ARCTIC

SCPAP members attended a panel discussion on the topic of "Cooperation in a Changing Arctic." The panel discussion was organized as one of many activities attended by the Fulbright Arctic Scholars throughout the week. Panellists included Chair Aaja Chemnitz Larsen; Senator Lisa Murkowski; Ms. Anniken Krutnes, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to the U.S.; Ambassador David Balton; and Ms. Iris Ferguson (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Arctic and Global Resilience, U.S. Department of Defense). The

⁶ Arctic Circle, [2023 Arctic Circle Assembly](#).

panel was moderated by Mr. Mike Sfraga. Topics of discussion were varied, but included Norway's upcoming Arctic Council chairship, Arctic cooperation and Arctic infrastructure investments.

CANADIAN REPORT

Mr. Maloney presented the Canadian report on Arctic activities since the last SCPAR meeting attended by the Canadian delegation, which was held online in May 2022. Mr. Maloney highlighted that Canada faces many of the same challenges in its Arctic region as presented by the other Arctic States during their reports, such as a transition towards more renewable energy sources, and noted that cooperation between Arctic States was key to achieving these goals.

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP
President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., United States of America
DATES	From April 25 to 26, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	James Maloney Bob Zimmer
STAFF	Daniele Lafrance
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,399.33
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 6,938.01

HOSPITALITY	\$ 0,00
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,186.65
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0,00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0,00
TOTAL	\$ 15,523.99

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FROM April 25 TO 26, 2023

MEMBERS

Canada	James Maloney, MP
	Bob Zimmer, MP
	Daniele Lafrance, Adviser
Denmark/	Aaja Chemnitz Larson, MP, Chair of SCPAR
Greenland/ Faroe Islands	Iiuuna Marie Heilmann, Adviser
European Parliament	Fernando Garces de los Fayos Tourman, Adviser
Iceland	Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir, MP
	Hildur Edwald, Adviser
Norway	Lars Haltbakken, MP
	Bjørn Willy Robstad, Adviser
Sweden	Alexandra Anstrell, MP
	Eva Hjelm, Adviser
United States	Lisa Murkowski, Senator, Vice-Chair of SCPAR
	Dana Herndon, Adviser
	Emma Ashlock, Adviser
	Paul Radenacher, Adviser

PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

Aleut International Association

O. Patricia Lekanoff Gregory, Vice-President

Arctic Athabaskan Council

Gary Harrison, Chief (via videoconference)

Gwich'in Council International

Edward Alexander, Board Co-Chair

Sámi Parliamentary Council

Hakon Jonsson, President

OBSERVERS

Nordic Council

Oddný G. Hardardóttir, MP, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Iceland

Sigurdur Olafsson, Senior Adviser, Nordic Council Secretariat

West Nordic Council

Steinunn Thora Arnadottir, Chair of the West Nordic Council

Larus Valgardsson, Secretary General

Thorbjorb Eva Erlendsdottir, Assistant

SECRETARIAT

Peder Pedersen, Secretary General and Adviser for the Parliament of Denmark

GUEST SPEAKERS

Ambassador Anniken Ramberg, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to the United States

Ambassador David Balton, Senior Fellow at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Mike Sfraga, Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission

Iris Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Arctic and Global Resilience, U.S. Department of Defense