

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding
its participation at the Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

**Washington, D.C., United States of America
December 10-12, 2018**

REPORT

The 18th annual Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum was the largest gathering of NATO member state legislators in Washington in 2018. The Parliament of Canada was represented by Borys Wrzesnewskyj, M.P. and head of the delegation; the Hon. Joseph A. Day, Senator; and Rachel Blaney, M.P. The following topics were discussed:

- Transatlantic trade relations
- U.S. approach toward Russia
- The impact of midterm elections on U.S. domestic and foreign policy
- Transatlantic relations and burden sharing

The National Defense University and the Atlantic Council of the United States hosted the forum and the meetings were conducted under the Chatham House Rule. As such, the following report will review the key themes discussed without attributing any positions or viewpoints to attendees.

MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR KURT VOLKER, U.S. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR UKRAINE

Before attending the Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum, the delegation met with Ambassador Volker to discuss recent developments in Ukraine. The discussion focused on the incidents in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov and on the seizure of Ukrainian vessels and crew by Russia.

During the discussion, Mr. Volker reiterated U.S. support for Ukraine and stressed the importance of the March 31, 2019 presidential elections. This was followed by a general discussion on the political situation in Ukraine and the country's various presidential candidates.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj informed Mr. Volker of the Government of Canada's decision to send a large contingent of presidential election observers to ensure that the vote is free of outside interference.

TRANSATLANTIC TRADE RELATIONS

The U.S., the European Union and Canada have a shared stake in the international trading system and have been global leaders in building an open trading order as embodied in the rules-based World Trade Organization (WTO). They have also constructed particularly liberal trading arrangements among themselves which have created enormous prosperity and political comity. But the politics of free trade have shifted, and the trading order constructed over the past 60 years confronts a range of serious challenges.

Because of Brexit, the EU is losing an important player, but EU member states hope to preserve a strong trading relationship with the United Kingdom regardless of the outcome of negotiations.

One briefer explained that the EU has closed a new trading deal with Canada which will bring advantages to both sides. Thousands of EU jobs can be attributed to trade with

Canada, and this reflects a new generation of trading relations premised on environmental sustainability and protecting human and worker rights.

The EU is the largest free-trade area in the world, and the U.S.–EU trading relationship constitutes the world's most important trade corridor. The EU trades far more with the U.S. than with any other trade partner. The two account for 46% of the world's GDP, half of the world's Foreign Direct Investment and a third of the world's trade flows.

However, it was pointed out that the primary preoccupation of U.S. trade officials is China, which has premised its economy on an opaque form of state capitalism that has proven highly disruptive to global markets. The EU, Canada and the U.S. have long played the role of standard setters, and there is much that can be done on this front to parry the Chinese challenge which is premised on a state-interventionist rather than a liberal-market model.

Canada brings yet another set of perspectives to the table as it is vested in close trading relations with both the U.S. and the EU. The Canadian economy is very trade dependent and has been the key to Canada's prosperity. The North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been a cornerstone of Canadian trade and, since its signing, has triggered a threefold increase in trade with the U.S. and Mexico.

Trade with the U.S. is by far the largest driver of the Canadian economy, while Canada is the largest trading partner of the U.S. Trade liberalisation promotes growth, and this is precisely why Canada is so wedded to the goal of reducing impediments to trade.

U.S. APPROACH TO RUSSIA

Discussions about Russia covered a broad range of issues and challenges driving divergence between the U.S. and Russia specifically and between Russia and NATO Allies more broadly.

The Alliance was slow to recognize the depth of Russia's attempts to undo the Euro-Atlantic order in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia. Today all Allies recognize and condemn Russia's actions. The Russian government has interfered in numerous democratic elections – particularly seeking to undermine the democratic systems of those powers it deems strong and capable of challenging Russia (e.g., the U.S., the U.K. and France). Moscow has also conducted attacks on U.S. energy power systems, helped rebels shoot down aircraft in Europe, used chemical weapons in the U.K., bombed innocent civilians in Syria, etc.

A key takeaway from the discussion was that the U.S. needs to improve its strategy—what are the ways, ends, and means needed to counter Russian disinformation. Experts promoted a whole-of-nation campaign to counter foreign efforts to destabilize democratic institutions.

In general, briefers advocated being clear, firm, and consistent with Russia, telling delegates to hold it accountable at all levels to get it to modify their behaviour – despite the Russians' refusal to listen and the repetitive nature of the task, this is the only way to remain clear on what position the U.S. and Allies take. Briefers also stressed the necessity of maintaining the possibility for dialogue—to communicate not only how dangerous all of Russia's increasingly escalatory actions are, but also to demonstrate the desire to remain transparent about U.S. and Allied interests and the steps to take to defend those interests.

There was a broad consensus, however, that any future dialogue with Russia must come from a position of strength.

THE IMPACT OF MIDTERM ELECTIONS ON U.S. DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

Experts noted that Allies must expect a U.S. that will not offer the international leadership it once did, principally due to the fact that the U.S. has a president who is far more concerned about things that will affect him personally, rather than about the broader interests of the country. Experts also discussed the evolution over time of the role of the executive branch of government in foreign policy and the relative decline of congressional powers in the domain, despite the role originally outlined for the branch of government in the U.S. Constitution. Today, the U.S. president is very unconstrained in foreign policy, and there is a relative decline of foreign policy expertise among members of Congress. Part of the reason for this is the fact that members of Congress are not rewarded domestically for working on international issues. It was acknowledged that true, strong bipartisan support for NATO continues to exist. This strong level of support extends into the public sphere as well. President Trump's rhetoric challenging NATO and its relevance today vis-à-vis the current international security environment and U.S. interests, however, is eroding support among Republicans (both legislators and civilians). Experts warned that support for NATO entering the increasingly partisan fray of domestic politics could be bad for long-term U.S. support for the Alliance.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS AND BURDEN SHARING

The broad sweep of challenges to Allied security in today's current security environment underlines the vital nature of a strong and united transatlantic Alliance. Growing brinkmanship in the east vis-à-vis a resurgent, revisionist, and capable Russia as well as a host of security challenges from the south are pushing NATO to rethink its collective defence and deterrence posture.

NATO is implementing ambitious new initiatives to adapt its defence and deterrence posture in response to a rapidly evolving complex international security environment. In parallel there is a rising expectation that all NATO Allies must do more to invest in the success of these initiatives.

The United States' expectations of its Allies to do more is increasing the pressure on the already substantive shift in the burden sharing debate made at the 2014 Wales Summit, when Allies committed to moving toward dedicating 2% of their GDP toward defence spending by 2024 – 20% of this increased spending, it was also stipulated, should be dedicated to purchasing new equipment and research and development (R&D).

Among Allies, the burden sharing debate intensified due to the persistent fall off of NATO Europe and Canada's defence spending in the wake of the Cold War, even while the U.S. took the opposite course after the 9/11 attacks. Increased pressures on the U.S. globally and the perception of some Allies' decisions to opt out of NATO operations or tasks in recent years have only increased the temperature of the debate surrounding Allied contributions.

Despite criticism of the 2% guideline due to its definitional and conceptual shortcomings, the Wales defence spending commitment has anchored the Alliance to the benchmark.

All the briefers said that NATO is a central pillar of U.S. transatlantic policy, and peace and security in Europe and North America demand steady resolve from all Allies. This means that the NATO PA serves as an essential institution to create and maintain common understanding of the policies and challenges we all face—by creating a link to national parliaments and publics, the organization serves as a vital clearinghouse that can inform both parliaments and their nations' publics on important NATO issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij, M.P.
Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., United States of America
DATES	December 10-12, 2018
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Joseph Day
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Rachel Blaney
STAFF	Jean-François Pagé
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,753.33
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 5,438.91
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,833.89
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 1,276.25
TOTAL	\$ 16,302.38