

Canada – Europe  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
Canada – Europe

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## **Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association**

### **Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

**Reykjavik, Iceland**

**May 15, 2023**

## Report

On May 15, 2023, a member of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU), Member of Parliament Stéphane Bergeron, went to Reykjavik, Iceland, to participate in the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and other related events.

Canada, which has the status of official observer<sup>1</sup> to the Council of Europe, does not participate in Standing Committee meetings. However, in light of the fact that the fourth Council of Europe Summit, the first since 2005<sup>2</sup>, was being held in Reykjavik on May 15 and 16, the Standing Committee decided to hold an “extraordinary meeting”<sup>3</sup> in Reykjavik the day before the summit began and invited one member from every observer country delegation and other democratic partners to participate.

### EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

In the morning and early afternoon of May 15, 2023, before the meeting of the Standing Committee, Mr. Bergeron participated in the following events:

- Two round tables on the theme of “A Democracy Fit for the Future” (“Old and New Challenges to Democracy” and “Addressing the Root Causes of Democratic Backsliding”) organized in co-operation with the Parliament of Iceland and the University of Iceland. (Mr. Bergeron spoke about “democratorships” during the question period following the presentations by panel members at the first round table);
- A special ceremony on women’s empowerment in the presence of the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, and the former president of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogabottir, after whom a new award has been named;<sup>4</sup> and
- A working lunch.

The round tables were facilitated by Steinunn Gestsdóttir, Pro-Rector of Academic Affairs and Development at the University of Iceland. The following individuals participated in one or both of the round tables:

- Alexander Shlyk, Special Representative for Elections of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya;
- Mariia Mezentseva, Chairperson of the Ukrainian Delegation to PACE;
- Jón Olafsson, Professor of Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Iceland;
- Tiny Kox, President of PACE;
- Lilja Alfreosdóttir, Minister of Culture and Business Affairs of Iceland;
- Daníel E. Arnarsson, Director of the National Queer Organization;
- Isabel Alejandra Díaz, Iceland’s UN Youth Representative for Education, Science and Culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, [Council of Europe \(CoE\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe, [Summits of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe](#).

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [The Standing Committee will hold an extraordinary meeting in Reykjavik on the eve of the 4th Summit](#), News release, March 20, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, [New Prize will reward achievements leading to women’s empowerment, says Secretary General](#), News release, May 15, 2023.

## MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The meeting of the Standing Committee included the following activities, events and debates:

- Welcome address by Birgir Ármannsson, Speaker of Althingi (the Parliament of Iceland);
- Video message by Ruslan Stefanchuk, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada (the Parliament of Ukraine);
- Introductory remarks by Bjarni Jónsson, Chairperson of the Icelandic Delegation to the PACE, and Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- Statement by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, leader in exile of the Belarus democratic opposition and putative president of Belarus;
- Concluding remarks by Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland, and Tiny Kox, President of PACE.

Mr. Bergeron also attended the following discussions, which took the form of interactive panels:

- “The Council of Europe as a key player of the multilateral architecture”; and
- “The Council of Europe as a pioneer of human rights protection: the new generation of rights”.

These debates were moderated by Rósa Björk Brynjólfsdóttir, from the Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic Delegation to PACE. The following individuals were part of one or both of the panels:

- Tiny Kox, President of PACE;
- Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland;
- Per Olsson Fridh, former Swedish minister for International Development Cooperation;
- Sylvie Bermann, former ambassador of France to Beijing, London and Moscow;
- Alice Bergholtz, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe;
- Katrin Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland;
- Ilze Brands Kehris, United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights;
- Nathalie Smuha, Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, expert on artificial intelligence;
- Tinna Hallgrímsdóttir, Youth Representative on the Icelandic Climate Council.

Lastly, Mr. Bergeron attended a reception at the invitation of the Speaker of the Parliament of Iceland, Birgir Ármannsson, and a dinner co-hosted by Mr. Ármannsson and Iceland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir.

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP  
President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Reykjavík, Iceland
<b>DATES</b>	May 15, 2023
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Stéphane Bergeron
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 5,521.54
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 800.09
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 551.83
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 6,873.46</b>