

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Fourth Part of the 2022 Ordinary Session of the
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Strasbourg, France and Warsaw, Poland

From October 10 to 20, 2022

Report

From 7–20 October 2022, the Canada–Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU) sent a delegation of seven parliamentarians to Strasbourg, France to participate in the fourth part of the 2022 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Following the PACE session, the delegation undertook a parliamentary mission to Poland.

The delegates were Francesco Sorbara, M.P., President of CAEU; Hon. David Wells, Senator, Vice-President; Hon. Lucie Moncion, Senator; Hon. Percy Downe, Senator; Stéphane Bergeron, M.P.; Larry Brock, M.P.; and Don Davies, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by the association secretary, Jessica Kulka, and an association adviser, BJ Siekierski.

PARTICIPATION IN THE FOURTH PART OF THE 2022 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

From 10–14 October, the delegation participated in the fourth part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

During the fourth part-session, a wide range of topics were debated in the Assembly and in its committees. The Assembly held debates on the following:

- Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee;
- Military hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including strikes against settlements and civilian infrastructures;
- Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans;
- Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe;
- Misuse of the Schengen Information system by Council of Europe member States as a politically motivated sanction;
- The honouring of obligations and commitments by Türkiye;
- The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Hungary;
- Safe third countries for asylum seekers/Pushbacks on land and sea: illegal measures of migration management;
- Further escalation in the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine;
- Threatened bans of Pride events in Council of Europe member States;
- The impact of Brexit on human rights on the island of Ireland;
- The fight for a level playing field – ending discrimination against women in the world of sport;
- The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Romania;
- The future of work is here: revisiting labour rights; and

- Preventing vaccine discrimination.

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Ignazio Cassis, President of the Swiss Confederation;
- Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland;
- Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania; and
- Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.

Finally, the Assembly awarded the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize to the imprisoned Russian opposition leader, Vladimir Kara-Murza. His wife, Evgenia Kara-Murza, accepted the award on his behalf.

Canadian Activities During the Session

The members of the delegation actively participated in the PACE proceedings. In addition, the delegation held bilateral meetings with other member delegations and attended the meetings of PACE political groups.

Meeting with the Republic of Moldova's Delegation to PACE

On 10 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe met with the Chairperson of the Republic of Moldova's delegation to PACE, Ion Groza, M.P. and Mihail Popsoi, M.P.

The focus of the discussion was on how Russia's war against Ukraine was affecting Moldova. Mr. Popsoi told the delegation that earlier that day Russian missile strikes on Kyiv had violated Moldovan airspace and explained that Russia's ambassador to Moldova had been summoned to provide an explanation. Mr. Popsoi then described the challenge posed by Moldova's dependence on Russian natural gas imports.

The delegations also discussed the European Union's (EU) decision to grant Moldova EU candidate status and the Moldovan government's related efforts to fight corruption and implement judicial reform.

Meeting with Armenia's Delegation to PACE

On 10 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe met with the Chairperson of Armenia's delegation to PACE, Ruben Rubinyan, M.P., as well as Arusyak Julhakyán, M.P., Sona Ghazaryan, M.P., Armen Rustamyan, M.P., and Vladimir Vardanyan, M.P.

Mr. Rubinyan provided Armenia's perspective on the renewed hostilities between his country and Azerbaijan – which he characterized as the aggressor – and condemned the alleged summary execution of Armenian prisoners of war.

Canadian delegates sought to better understand the link between the recent hostilities and the longstanding conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and raised the issue of Armenia's compliance with United Nations Security Resolutions related to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Canadian delegates also asked about Armenia's abstention from the March 2022 United Nations General Assembly vote that condemned Russia's violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. They asked how Armenia views its relationship with Russia more broadly and what obligations Russia has to Armenia under the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The Armenian delegation explained that their actions vis-à-vis Russia reflect their reality: that of small democracy in an authoritarian neighbourhood.

Meeting with Poland's Delegation to PACE

On 12 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe held a bilateral meeting with the Chairperson of Poland's delegation to PACE, Arkadiusz Mularczyk, M.P, and Vice-Chairperson, Iwona Arent, M.P.

Canadian delegates asked about the impact of the influx of Ukrainians on Poland in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine. In his response, Mr. Mularczyk emphasized, among other things, some of the challenges faced by the Polish education system in terms of resources and infrastructure.

Mr. Mularczyk, who has also served as the Chair of the Parliamentary Group for the estimation of the amount of compensation due to Poland from Germany for damage caused during World War II, then presented the Canadian delegation with the three-volume report that resulted from the group's work. He highlighted the fact that a strong majority in the Sejm (lower house of the national legislature) had passed a resolution calling for Germany to pay reparations, and that Poland had sent a diplomatic note to Germany about the reparations claim. He asked for Canadian assistance in encouraging Germany to negotiate with Poland.

Meeting with Azerbaijan's Delegation to PACE

Later in the day on 12 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe held a bilateral meeting with members of Azerbaijan's delegation to PACE, which included: Chairperson of the delegation, Samad Seyidov, M.P.; Nigar Arpadarai, M.P.; Kamal Jafarof, M.P.; Sevinj Fataliyeva, M.P.; Parvin Karimzada, M.P.; Erkin Gadirli, M.P.; and Asim Mollazada, M.P.

Mr. Seyidov noted that it was a historic first meeting with the Canadian delegation at PACE and expressed Azerbaijan's desire for closer ties with Europe and Western countries. Mr. Jafarof then addressed the recent outbreak of hostilities with Armenia and provided the Azerbaijani perspective on the long-standing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Canadian delegates asked about videos circulating online showing Azerbaijani executions of Armenian prisoners of war. The Azerbaijani delegation maintained that arrests had already been made for the alleged crimes. They then pointed to the small but vibrant Armenian community in Azerbaijan as evidence the two peoples can coexist peacefully, and criticized the role the Armenian diaspora – outside of Azerbaijan – has played over the years in escalating tensions.

The Canadian delegation asked about Azerbaijan's position on Russia's war on Ukraine and noted Azerbaijan's absence from the March 2022 United Nations General Assembly vote that condemned Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Azerbaijani delegation affirmed their support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and described their efforts to increase gas exports to Europe.

Lunch with the United Kingdom's Delegation to PACE

On 13 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe hosted a lunch for the United Kingdom's (U.K.) delegation to PACE, which included: John Howell, Chairperson of the delegation, M.P.; Geraint Davies, M.P.; Lord Alexander Dundee; Lord Leslie Griffiths; Lord Richard Keen; Ian Paisley, M.P., and Jane Stevenson, M.P.

In individual conversations over lunch, Canadian delegates asked their British counterparts about the political situation in the U.K. More specifically, they asked about the likelihood of then Prime Minister Liz Truss resigning and there being a general election earlier than anticipated. Canadian delegates also asked about the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland and the possibility of another referendum on Scottish independence.

Meeting with Ukraine's Delegation to PACE

Following the lunch meeting with the U.K. delegation, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Davies, Senator Wells, and Senator Downe met with Ukraine's delegation to PACE, which included: Chairperson Maria Mezentseva, M.P.; Olena Khomenko, M.P.; Larysa Bilozir, M.P.; Iryna Konstankevich, M.P.; Yuriy Kamelchuk, M.P.; Oleksandra Ustinova, M.P.; Yevheniia Kravchuk, M.P.; and Pavlo Sushko, M.P.

The Ukrainian delegation began by stressing that all political parties in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) are united in support of the Ukrainian war effort and thanked Canada for its generous support. At the same time, they informed the Canadian delegation that Ukraine's military is using 5,000 to 10,000 rounds of ammunition per day and advocated for additional Canadian rounds of 155 mm NATO standard ammunition. The Ukrainian delegation also informed the Canadians that 25% of Ukraine has been mined and noted that Canadian-made robots have assisted in demining efforts.

Canadian delegates asked about Belarus' role in supporting Russia's war against Ukraine and were told by the Ukrainian delegation that Belarus has done everything short of putting boots on the ground. They urged the Canadian delegation to push for expanded sanctions on the Belarussian military.

Finally, the Canadian delegation asked about the prospects of Ukrainian membership in the EU. The Ukrainian delegation explained that they are making significant progress towards meeting the criteria for EU membership but acknowledged the process will likely take years.

Meeting with Türkiye's Delegation to PACE

Late in the afternoon on 13 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Brock met with Ahmet Yildiz, M.P., Chairperson of the Turkish delegation to PACE, in Türkiye's Council of

Europe office. Mr. Yildiz emphasized the ways Türkiye has supported Ukraine since the outbreak of war while also playing a mediating role. He specifically mentioned the donation of Bayraktar TB2 drones to Ukraine and Türkiye's denial of naval access to the Black Sea.

Mr. Sorbara raised the issue of democratic backsliding in Türkiye, which Mr. Yildiz maintained has been exaggerated. Mr. Yildiz then discussed the state of Türkiye's relations with Europe. He noted that there has been an erosion of trust between Türkiye and the EU related to Turkey's stalled EU accession process, and explained Türkiye's current objections to Finland and Sweden's NATO membership.

Mr. Yildiz also described the burden on Türkiye of hosting Syrian and Afghan refugees.

Finally, regarding Canada–Türkiye relations more specifically, Mr. Yildiz expressed disappointment that the Canadian government had suspended certain export permits for military goods and technology to Türkiye. He concluded by inviting the Canadian delegation to visit.

Meeting with Romania's Delegation to PACE

While Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Brock met with the Chairperson of the Turkish delegation to PACE, Senator Wells and Mr. Bergeron met with members of the Romanian delegation, including Viorel-Riceard Badea, Senator, and Titus Corlăţean, Senator.

The delegations discussed Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly's visit to Romania in March 2022, efforts in the Canadian Parliament to establish a Canada–Romania Parliamentary Friendship Group, Romania's low dependence on natural gas, and the urgent need to help Moldova become more energy independent.

Meeting with France's Delegation to PACE

Early in the evening of 13 October 2022, three members of the French delegation to PACE – Chairperson Bertrand Bouyx, Senator Alain Milon, and M.P. Mireille Clapot hosted Mr. Sobara, Mr. Bergeron, and Mr. Brock in the French Council of Europe office.

Senator Milon, a medical doctor by training, had questions for the Canadian delegation about the Canadian healthcare system. More specifically, he asked about the degree of privatization and the provision of telemedicine services. The conversation then shifted to the implications of a motion adopted in the Assembly earlier in the day to declare Russia a terrorist regime. Mr. Bergeron sought to better understand whether the motion was purely symbolic or would have a tangible, sanction-like impact. Finally, the delegations also discussed the role of nuclear energy in Canada and France and the digitization of government services.

Canadian Interventions in Assembly Debates

All delegates participated in the Assembly's debates. They made seven interventions during debates and tabled 14 speeches in writing. The texts of delegates speeches are available on the PACE website.¹

1. Monday, 10 October 2022

Mr. Bergeron submitted his speech in writing for the current affairs debate on "Military hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including strikes against settlements and civilian infrastructures."

2. Tuesday, 11 October 2022

Mr. Brock submitted his speech in writing for the debate on "Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans."

Senator Wells, Senator Downe, and Mr. Brock submitted their speeches in writing for the debate on "Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe."

Mr. Bergeron submitted a speech in writing for the debate on the "Misuse of the Schengen Information system by Council of Europe member States as a politically-motivated sanction."

3. Wednesday, 12 October 2022

Mr. Sorbara submitted his speech in writing for the debate on "The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Hungary."

Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Bergeron submitted their speeches in writing for the joint debate: "Safe third countries for asylum seekers/Pushbacks on land and sea: illegal measures of migration management."

4. Thursday, 13 October 2022

Senator Downe spoke in the debate under urgent procedure: "Further escalation in the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine," while Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Sorbara submitted their speeches in writing.

Mr. Brock and Mr. Bergeron spoke in the debate on "The impact of Brexit on human rights on the island of Ireland."

Mr. Davies spoke in the debate on "The fight for a level playing field – ending discrimination against women in the world of sport." Senator Moncion submitted her speech in writing for the same debate.

Mr. Sorbara submitted his speech in writing for the debate on "The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Romania."

¹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, "[2022 – Fourth part-session](#)," Verbatim listing by session.

5. Friday, 14 October 2022

Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Davies spoke in the debate on “The future of work is here: revisiting labour rights.”

Senator Wells spoke in the debate on “Preventing vaccine discrimination” and Mr. Brock submitted his speech in writing.

Senator Downe submitted his speech in writing for the free debate.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO POLAND

From 15–20 October 2022, the delegation travelled to Lublin, Warsaw, and Treblinka, Poland for a parliamentary mission.

During the mission, the delegation met with:

- Ukrainian teachers;
- An official from the city of Lublin;
- A representative from the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine;
- The director of the Lublin Chapter of the Polish Red Cross;
- Officials from the European Commission’s delegation in Poland;
- Officials from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR);
- Executives from the Northland Power and PKN Orlen responsible for the Baltic Power offshore wind project;
- The chair and vice-chair of the Poland–Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group;
- Researchers from the Polish Institute of International Affairs;
- The Deputy Polish Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Students and staff from Warsaw University’s new Canadian Studies program;
- Officials from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- Undersecretary of State for Security, the Americas, Asia and Eastern Policy; and
- Canada’s Ambassador-designate to Poland.

A. Meeting with Ukrainian Teachers

On the morning of 15 October, the delegation flew from Paris to Warsaw and was greeted, upon landing, by Jeanette Saunter, Political Counsellor at the Canadian embassy in Warsaw and Małgorzata Kuczyńska, Political and Economic Affairs Officer. The delegation immediately took a bus to Lublin, Poland – roughly 100 km from the Poland–Ukraine border. The delegation’s first meeting in Lublin was with Ukrainian teachers who, since September 2022, have been running a “Saturday School” for approximately 150 displaced Ukrainian students who range in age from roughly four to 17.

The teachers explained that the classes take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Saturday and focus on Ukrainian language, culture, and history. The teachers told the delegation that it is a struggle to distract the children from the war in their country. They mentioned younger children drawing war scenes in their art classes and older male students having a difficult time dealing with the absence of their fathers, most of whom are in Ukraine defending their country.

The teachers explained that many of their students are studying five days a week in Polish schools and have integrated well, while others are continuing to follow their Ukrainian curriculum online. The delegation asked the teachers if there were additional resources they needed and what more Canada could do to support them. The teachers replied that they had the resources they needed, but they pleaded for the Canadian government to provide Ukraine more military assistance. They stressed that Ukrainians want to return home, but that the war must be won before they can.

B. Meeting with Lublin Municipal Office and the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine

Following their meeting with the Ukrainian teachers, the delegation went to the Lublin town hall. At the town hall, they were briefed by Roman Jaborkhel – Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Centre at the Lublin Municipal Office – and Julian Hofman, a legal advisor from the Rule of Law Institute Foundation and member of the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine.

Mr. Hofman began by explaining that in the early hours of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, three Lublin-based non-governmental organizations – including the Rule of Law Institute Foundation – came together with employees from the city of Lublin and local volunteers to form the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine.

Among other things, the Committee helped find food and accommodation and provided legal support and transportation. In response to a question from the delegation about how the Committee was financing its activities, Mr. Hofman cited the support of the Danish Refugee Council, the UNHCR, and UNICEF, and said that the Committee is constantly applying for small grants.

Mr. Jaborkhel noted that at one point, Lublin – with a population of 350,000 – had taken in 60,000 Ukrainians and that an estimated 1.2 million people passed through the city. He said that the city had managed well – despite overlapping crises – and succeeded in avoiding the establishment of refugee camps. He expressed concern, however, about a second wave of displaced Ukrainians in the winter and the possibility that the war could continue for years to come. Like the Ukrainian teachers, he asked the delegation to advocate for increased Canadian military aid to Ukraine.

C. Meeting with the Lublin Chapter of the Polish Red Cross

Following the meeting at the Lublin town hall, the delegation visited the Lublin Chapter of the Polish Red Cross. Maciej Budka, Director of the Lublin Chapter of the Polish Red Cross, greeted the delegation and provided a briefing. At the outset, Mr. Budka noted that

Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship had paid them a visit in May, and thanked Canada for its support and attention.

Mr. Budka said that Poland is good at improvisation and that many NGOs were active on the Poland-Ukraine border shortly after Russia began its invasion. Initially, Mr. Budka added, they had lots of resources, but that donor fatigue was starting to set in.

Like Mr. Jaborkhel and Mr. Hofman, Mr. Budka expressed concern about the coming winter. He emphasized the fact that people can survive in tents in the summer months, but not in the winter, and that they were estimating there could be between 500,000 and two million additional Ukrainians in Poland as the weather gets colder.

The delegation asked about the Red Cross' cash and voucher assistance program. More specifically, they asked how long it takes to deliver cash to those in need. They also asked Mr. Budka about the Red Cross' ability to work with the Russians during the conflict. Mr. Budka told the delegation that it can take between 10 days and four months to provide the cash and voucher program to those who are eligible. With respect to Russia's cooperation with the Red Cross, Mr. Budka reiterated the Red Cross' seven principles, one of which is neutrality. He added, however, that the Russian army's alleged violations of international humanitarian law – including their use of the Red Cross emblem on military vehicles – have posed a significant challenge.

D. Visit to Treblinka Extermination Camp

On 16 October 2022, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Brock, Mr. Bergeron, and Senator Moncion visited the sites of the Treblinka I Nazi forced labour camp and the Treblinka II extermination camp. A guide provided a tour of the camps and explained their respective histories. The delegation then visited the Treblinka Museum and laid a wreath to commemorate the over 800,000 estimated victims.

E. Meeting with the Ambassador-designate

On the morning of 17 October 2022, the delegation went to the Canadian embassy in Warsaw for an initial meeting with Canada's Ambassador-designate to Poland, Catherine Godin. The ambassador-designate briefed the delegation and took their questions on recent developments in Poland and the state of Canada–Poland relations.

The ambassador-designate emphasized that the Canadian government has raised concerns with the Polish government regarding its respect for the rule of law, women's reproductive rights, and the discrimination faced by Poland's 2SLGBTQI+ communities, but she added that Canada and Poland are united on Ukraine and work together well despite those differences.

As one example, she highlighted flights full of displaced Ukrainians that the Canadian government had chartered from Poland to Winnipeg, Montreal, and Halifax. She also highlighted the visit to Poland, the week before, of Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand, and the signing – with her Polish counterpart, Mariusz Błaszczak, of a Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation.

F. Meeting with the European Commission's Representatives in Poland

Following the delegation's meeting with the ambassador-designate, they remained in the embassy for a briefing by Wojciech Wysocki, the Head of Political Section at the European Commission's Representation in Poland, and Filip Skawiński, a policy analyst with the Commission.

Mr. Wysocki and Mr. Skawiński began by providing a high-level overview of the European Commission's role and its responsibility for monitoring EU member states' compliance with EU law. They explained that they communicate Polish policy developments to Brussels and communicate EU policy to the Polish government.

Mr. Wysocki and Mr. Skawiński said that since becoming an EU member in 2004, Poland has benefitted immensely from EU funding for its highways and urban development, amongst other things. They noted that Poland's Gross Domestic Product per capita (in Purchasing Power Parity terms) has surpassed Greece and Portugal and led to very high levels of support within Poland – consistently in the 80% to 90% range – for EU membership.

At the same time, they added, the current Polish government has continued to play the Eurosceptic card and consistently ignored the European Commission's long-standing concerns about the independence of the Polish judiciary. To date, they said, the Polish government has ignored the Commission's demands for reforms and European Court of Justice rulings. Doing so, Mr. Wysocki and Mr. Skawiński added, has had tangible consequences on Poland's budget, because the European Commission has refused to unblock Poland's €35.4 billion Recovery and Resilience Plan funding. Going forward, they told the delegation, the Polish government's intransigence could also block their receipt of an additional €76.5 in EU funding – between 2021 and 2027 – from the EU's Cohesion Fund.

G. Meeting with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights then hosted a lunch for the delegation at their headquarters in Warsaw. The ODIHR was represented by Director, Mateo Mecacci; First Deputy Director, Kateryna Ryabiko; Andrew Gardner, Deputy Head of the Human Rights Department; Alice Szczepanikowa, Adviser on Migration and Freedom of Movement; and Ghenadie Barba, Chief of the Rule of Law Unit.

The ODIHR representatives began by providing an overview of the office's roles and activities, including the observation of elections and human rights monitoring. The conversation quickly focused, however, on ODIHR's work related to the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Mecacci informed the delegation that ODIHR's first report on violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine, from April to June, was published in July. Mr. Mecacci noted that the report was informed by missions to Bucha, Irpin, and Hostomel, but that Russia had declined to cooperate. He explained that it reported violations of international law committed by both sides, but that the alleged Ukrainian violations were not on the same scale as those reportedly committed by the Russians.

The delegation asked the ODIHR's representatives about election monitoring in Ukraine and Russia. The ODIHR representatives acknowledged the challenges that could arise in monitoring Ukraine's next legislative elections, which are scheduled to take place in 2023. More specifically, they raised the issues of martial law in Ukraine, Ukrainian diaspora voting, and the suspension of allegedly pro-Russia political parties. With respect to Russia, Mr. Mecacci said there was a concerted ODIHR effort to monitor the 2021 State Duma elections, but that Russian COVID-19 restrictions had prevented that from happening.

H. Guided tour of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising

The delegation was then given a guided tour of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising – a World War II insurrection during which the Poles tried to liberate the city from the Germans. The visit included a short film that showed the extent of Warsaw's destruction during the war.

I. Visit to Northland Power's Baltic Power Office in Warsaw

Accompanied by Senior Trade Commissioner Stephanie Berlet and Trade Commissioner Arkadiusz Wysocki, the delegation finished the day by visiting the Warsaw office of Baltic Power – a joint venture between the Canadian energy company, Northland Power, and the Polish energy company, PKN Orlen.

Cat Brown, Baltic Power's Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Installation Director, and Jaroslaw Broda, a Baltic Power board member, briefed the delegation on the project, which is expected to begin construction in 2024 and commercial operations in 2026. Ms. Brown and Mr. Broda explained that the project is located 22.5 km from shore, in the Baltic Sea, and aims to produce 1,200 megawatts of power – enough to provide energy to 1.5 million Polish households.

The delegation, Ms. Brown and Mr. Broda discussed the environmental impact of the project and its financing, as well as Poland's broader efforts to increase renewable energy production. Mr. Broda explained that the Polish government, starting in 2016, had made it exceptionally difficult to build onshore wind farms, but that there was increasing recognition that Poland's renewable energy production must be increased going forward. Mr. Sorbara concluded the discussions by remarking that it was great to see collaboration between a Canadian and Polish company.

J. Meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair Poland–Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group

On the morning of 18 October 2022, the delegation visited the Polish Sejm for a meeting with the Chair of the Poland–Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group, Krzysztof Śmiszek M.P., and the group's Vice-Chair, Katarzyna Ueberhan, M.P. Mr. Śmiszek and Ms. Ueberhan – both members of the opposition – told the delegation that the Polish Parliament is extremely divided on many issues, but completely united when it comes to Ukraine. Mr. Śmiszek mentioned that Zmiana – a Polish, pro-Kremlin political party – had seen their modest support crater since the outbreak of the war.

The delegation asked Mr. Śmiszek and Ms. Ueberhan about German World War II reparations – a subject that had been raised in Strasbourg by the Chairperson of Poland’s delegation to PACE. Mr. Śmiszek reiterated that a resolution in the Sejm in support of the war reparations claim had received cross-party support. At the same time, he stressed that Germany had played a vital role in integrating Poland into the EU and that his party did not feel it was the right time to begin negotiations.

The delegation also asked Mr. Śmiszek and Ms. Ueberhan about Poland’s dispute with the European Commission, and whether there was a substantial risk Poland might not receive EU funding. While Mr. Śmiszek said that he had wanted to avoid being partisan in the meeting, he told the delegation that it was his personal view that the government had denied they were orchestrating a withdrawal from the EU – a so-called *Polexit* – while repeatedly taking actions which only made that outcome more likely. He said that, as a lawyer, he was appalled by the appointment of unqualified judges, and that the government’s actions in that respect had moved Poland backwards. He concluded by saying that the European Commission’s moral arguments had failed to persuade the government thus far, but that withholding funding could force the government to implement the European Commission’s requested changes.

Following the meeting with Mr. Śmiszek and Ms. Ueberhan, the delegation was given a guided tour of the Sejm and ate lunch in the Sejm restaurant.

K. Meeting with the Polish Institute of International Affairs

The delegation then met with analysts from the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) – a state-funded Polish think tank – at their office in Warsaw. The PISM analysts included Pawel Markiewicz, Advisor to the Director for U.S. Operations; Daniel Szeligowski, the Head of the Eastern Europe Programme; Agnieszka Legucka, a Russia analyst; and Wojciech Lorenz, a NATO, defence, and security analyst.

Mr. Markiewicz began by explaining that PISM has 45 analysts who deal with all areas of international affairs and who publish reports in Polish and English. He noted that Canada and Poland marked 80 years of diplomatic relations in 2022 and that PISM was collaborating with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute on a report about the relationship going forward. He then turned it over to the other analysts to weigh in on their areas of expertise.

Ms. Legucka and Mr. Szeligowski told the delegation that they believed President Putin thought he could easily repeat the success of the 2014 annexation of Crimea but was now – in light of Russia’s failures on the battlefield – trying to freeze the situation in place in the hope that Ukraine’s supporters would grow wary of providing continued military and financial support. Mr. Lorenz added that, so long as U.S. military aid to Ukraine is maintained, Russia will not be able to win the war, and said that if Ukraine were to capture Kherson, it could be a potential turning point. Ms. Legucka added that if Russia cannot defeat Ukraine, it will attempt to make it unliveable by destroying all its critical infrastructure.

The delegation asked the analysts what Russian actions they thought might trigger a collective response from NATO under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, whether Belarus could enter the war; and what might turn Russian elites against President Putin. In response, the analysts said that no one knows what could trigger a NATO Article 5

response. They said that Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko wanted to avoid getting his troops involved in the war, but that he had nonetheless been allowing Russia to attack Ukraine from its territory. Finally, they told the delegation that Russian elites were unhappy with the war, but that President Putin likely saw their being sanctioned internationally as an advantage, since they would be forced to remain in the country.

L. Meeting with Hanna Machińska, Deputy Polish Commissioner for Human Rights

The delegation then returned to the Canadian embassy for a meeting with Hanna Machińska, Deputy Polish Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms. Machińska – a lawyer, author of several publications on human rights protection, and former director of the Council of Europe’s Poland office – began by contrasting the Polish government’s response to the humanitarian crises at the Poland-Belarus and Poland-Ukraine borders.

At the Poland-Belarus border, she said, Polish border guards had pushed back migrants and asylum seekers to Belarus – often at night – in violation of international law and despite evidence of torture. She noted that the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has condemned the normalization of pushbacks in Europe generally and Poland specifically, and she expressed a desire to see the Polish government’s policies at the Belarussian border face further legal challenges.

In contrast, she said the collective Polish response at the Ukrainian border – including the Polish government’s – was fantastic. She did raise concerns about the treatment of Roma refugees from Ukraine, however, some of whom she said do not speak Ukrainian and have faced discrimination in Poland.

Finally, Ms. Machińska addressed the independence of the judiciary in Poland, which she said is at a critical juncture with serious implications. She described superficial changes the Polish government has made to comply with the European Commission’s demands and European Court of Justice rulings – such as renaming a disciplinary chamber for judges a professional development chamber – and stated that the independence of Poland’s judges is being threatened in a way that it has not been since Poland’s transition to democracy (1989–1991). She described the 2023 parliamentary elections as the most important in the country’s history and warned that Poland risks becoming an authoritarian country.

M. Visit to Warsaw University

On the morning of 19 October, the delegation visited Warsaw University to meet with students in its new bilingual Canadian Studies program. Mr. Sorbara gave opening remarks and the rest of the delegation introduced themselves. They then broke into groups with the students to answer their questions.

N. Meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office in Poland

Following the delegation’s meeting with the students at Warsaw University, it went to the office of UNHCR Poland for a meeting with its Senior External Relations Coordinator,

Andreas Kirchhof. Mr. Kirchhof began by thanking Canada for being a key partner and donor to UNHCR.

Mr. Kirchhof said Poland's response to the influx of Ukrainians was a textbook example of how to welcome refugees. He said that over 1.5 million Ukrainians had obtained a Polish national identity number (PESEL), allowing them to work and receive benefits. While he said it was estimated that over half of those with a PESEL number had found work, he added that many Ukrainians in Poland are highly educated and doing work for which they are overqualified. Like Ms. Machińska, he told the delegation that Ukrainian Roma have faced discrimination and have had difficulty finding work, but that the elderly and disabled have as well.

Mr. Kirchhof also said the UNHCR estimates that 80% of the Ukrainians in Poland will not return to Ukraine in the near future, and that 90% of them are still living with Polish host families, which may be difficult to sustain. He said that the Polish government would like Ukrainians to move on to smaller towns, but that they prefer to remain in large cities.

The delegation asked about the situation at the Belarus border and whether Russians fleeing military service could be considered refugees. Mr. Kirchhof replied that the UNHCR had made statements about the Belarus border, is monitoring the situation closely, and is communicating its concerns through the appropriate channels. With respect to Russians fleeing military service, he said that they can be considered refugees in some circumstances.

Overall, he said the UNHCR is well funded with respect to Ukraine, but that they have had to remind donors not to forget about other humanitarian crises around the world.

O. Meeting with the International Organization for Migration

After the meeting with UNHCR, the delegation met Mr. Colin Patrick Williamson, the IOM's Poland Emergency Coordinator, at the Canadian embassy. Mr. Williamson told the delegation that the IOM had 10 staff in Poland in February 2022, but that it is now up to 120 staff – most of whom are Ukrainian and Polish. He said the IOM is unlike other organizations in that it tends to hire locally.

To date, he said, IOM Poland has provided support to between 50,000 and 60,000 Ukrainians. He said that the impact of displaced Ukrainians in Poland has, to a certain extent, been a crisis of invisibility, because finding accommodation has not presented the challenge it often does in humanitarian crises. Nonetheless, like others, he expressed concerns about donor and volunteer fatigue, and said that the organization hopes to avoid a scenario in which Ukrainians feel they have to return to their country when it is not safe to do so.

P. Visit to the Mausoleum of Struggle and Martyrdom

The delegation was then given a guided visit of the Mausoleum of Struggle and Martyrdom, a museum located in the basement of the former headquarters of the Gestapo (Nazi secret police) during Germany's World War II occupation of Warsaw.

Q. Meeting with Marcin Przydacz, Undersecretary of State for Security, the Americas, Asia and Eastern Policy

After the visit to the museum, the delegation walked next door to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to meet with Marcin Przydacz, Undersecretary of State for Security, the Americas, Asia and Eastern Policy. Mr. Przydacz began by noting that it has been an intense year for Canada and Poland's bilateral relationship. He highlighted the visit to Poland, the week before, of Defence Minister Anita Anand, and the visit to Canada, in June 2022, of Elżbieta Witek, Marshal of the Sejm.

After acknowledging Poland's actions in support of displaced Ukrainians and the Ukrainian war effort, the delegation asked Mr. Przydacz about the ways Canada could assist Poland going forward and about Poland's stalled ratification of the Canada-European Union *Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement* (CETA).

First and foremost, Mr. Przydacz said that Poland's image has been unfairly tarnished in recent years and that they would appreciate Canadian help spreading the message that it is a normal and functioning democracy. He said that Poland has been providing Ukraine with significant military aid and was looking to all allies, including Canada, to help it backfill the military goods and equipment it had supplied. He also added that Poland would welcome Canadian liquified natural gas exports. Finally, with respect to CETA, Mr. Przydacz told the delegation that there was a need to highlight the advantages of the agreement more effectively. At the same time, he was optimistic about its eventual ratification.

R. Brunch with Canada's Ambassador-designate to Poland, Catherine Godin

Before leaving for the airport on 20 October, the delegation had a final brunch with Ambassador-designate, Catherine Godin, and Jeanette Saunter, Political Counsellor at the Canadian embassy in Warsaw. The delegation took turns summarizing some of what they heard throughout the week. They emphasized that they were told repeatedly that there was a need for increased Canadian defence spending and military assistance to Ukraine; that there were widespread concerns about the winter in Ukraine in light of the ongoing Russian destruction of Ukrainian energy infrastructure; that there was a role for Canada to play in contributing to Polish energy security; that they received mixed messages about the state of Poland's democracy and respect for the rule of law, and that they were unsure how Canada should respond; and finally, that history – more specifically, Nazi Germany's destruction of Poland during World War II – continued to be a live issue affecting Poland's current relationship with its powerful neighbour.

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP

President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Fourth Part of the 2022 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
DESTINATION	Strasbourg, France and Warsaw, Poland
DATES	From October 10 to 20, 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Lucie Moncion Hon. David Wells Hon. Percy Downe
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Stéphane Bergeron Larry Brock Don Davies Francesco Sorbara
STAFF	Jessica Kulka Billy Joe Siekierski
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 47,371.50
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 19,896.02
HOSPITALITY	\$ 1,341.63
PER DIEMS	\$ 15,965.28
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 431.58
TOTAL	\$ 85,006.01