

Canada – Europe  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
Canada – Europe

---

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

**Second Part of the 2023 Ordinary Session of the  
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

**Strasbourg, France**

**From 24 to 28 April 2023**

## **Report**

From 24 to 28 April 2023, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU) sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Strasbourg, France to participate in the second part of the 2023 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), for which Canada has observer status.

The delegates were Francesco Sorbara, M.P., President of CAEU; Hon. Percy Downe, Senator; Hon. David Wells, Senator; Hon. Lucie Moncion, Senator; Hon. Brian Francis, Senator; and Stéphane Bergeron, M.P.. The delegation was accompanied by the association secretary, Jessica Kulka, and an association adviser, Scott McTaggart.

### **Overview of the Agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

During the second 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
- Observation of the presidential election in Montenegro
- #RoadToReykjavik
- European Convention on Human Rights and national constitutions
- Assessing the functioning of the partnership for democracy
- Political strategies to prevent, prepare for, and face the consequences of natural disasters
- Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights
- Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators
- Russia's role in escalating tensions in the Republic of Moldova
- Safeguarding democracy, rights and the environment in international trade
- The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by San Marino
- Youth and the media

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
- Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Chair of the Committee of Ministers
- His Excellency Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, President of Iceland

### **Canadian Activities during the Session**

#### **Overview**

The members of the delegation actively participated in proceedings of the PACE, including plenary proceedings. In addition, delegates held bilateral meetings with other

delegations and attended receptions hosted by Ireland and the United Kingdom, as well as PACE's political groups.

## **Bilateral Meetings**

### **Meeting with Moldova's Delegation to PACE**

On 24 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Moldovan delegation. During the meeting, Moldovan delegates spoke about difficulties their country was facing because of political interference by Russia, which was seeking to counter Moldova's move towards European Union (EU) membership. Moldovan delegates also highlighted their country's energy vulnerability and their attempts to diversify energy sources away from Russia and Moldova's Russian-supported breakaway region of Transnistria.

Delegates discussed the war in Ukraine and the broader regional dynamics of Russian aggression. Moldovan delegates spoke about their country's admission of large numbers of Ukrainians and their hopes for a successful counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces. They also explained how Russia's aggression was pushing countries like Moldova further towards European integration, including membership in the EU.

### **Meeting with Spain's delegation to PACE**

On 25 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Spanish delegation. Spanish delegates emphasized Spain's upcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union and how the principles of the Council of Europe will inform their priorities during their mandate. Delegates also discussed Spain and Canada's common interests in Latin America, including supporting democratic institutions, and the importance of Canada-EU trade.

Spanish delegates were interested to hear about opinions in North America on the war in Ukraine. Canadian delegates stressed the broad support in Canada for the government assistance provided to Ukraine and offered opinions regarding political dynamics in the United States related to the war. Spanish delegates also expressed interest in Canada's experience with independence movements, including the enactment of the Clarity Act.<sup>1</sup>

### **Meeting with Azerbaijan's delegation to PACE**

On 25 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Azerbaijani delegation. Discussions focused on Azerbaijan's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan's relations with its neighbour, Armenia. Azerbaijani delegates denied that their government had restricted humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh, stated that Russian peacekeepers stationed in the region were attempting to undermine the peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and emphasized that Armenia was leveraging its diaspora population in western countries to spread disinformation regarding realities on the ground.

---

<sup>1</sup> [\*An Act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference\*](#), S.C. 2000, c. 26.

### **Meeting with Armenia's delegation to PACE**

On 25 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Armenian delegation. Discussions focused on Armenia's relations with its neighbour Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which has a large ethnic Armenian population. Armenian delegates stated that the Azerbaijani blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh was worsening, in violation of international law and the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenian delegates hoped that western countries would impose economic sanctions on Azerbaijan in response.

### **Meeting with France's delegation to PACE**

On 25 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the French delegation. Delegates discussed the war in Ukraine, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and EU defence policy, relations with China, support for Taiwan, and energy security in Europe.

### **Meeting with Germany's delegation to PACE**

On 25 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the German delegation. Canadian delegates noted the recent visit of the President of Germany to Canada and welcomed Germany's recent ratification of the *Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement between Canada and the EU*. Discussions focused on the war in Ukraine and the broader implications for Europe of Russian aggression, including as it relates to energy security and the spread of disinformation online. Relations with China were also discussed.

### **Meeting with Poland's delegation to PACE**

On 26 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Polish delegation. Discussions largely focused on the war in Ukraine, and the important role Poland is playing in broader multilateral efforts. Delegates discussed the implementation of sanctions, including the possibility of forfeiting Russian property, as well as the organizing and financing of Ukrainian reconstruction. Polish delegates expressed support for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine but warned against creating a "frozen conflict" that would serve Russian interests.

Delegates also discussed other issues facing Poland, including the transit of migrants through Belarus, the effects of the war on agricultural trade and Polish farmers, and the upcoming national elections.

### **Meeting with Ukraine's delegation to PACE**

On 26 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Ukrainian delegation. Discussion focused on the war in Ukraine. Ukrainian delegates recognized Canada's support to Ukraine and the Canadian delegation's active engagement on the issue at PACE. Ukrainian delegates also expressed hope that the then-upcoming Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government in Iceland would produce tangible

deliverables, including the creation of a register of claim for reconstruction and movement towards the establishment of a special international tribunal to prosecute Russian leaders for the crime of aggression.<sup>2</sup>

Ukrainian delegates also spoke about other issues facing their country, such as efforts to reduce corruption, and promote economic development and employment in the information technology sector.

### **Meeting with Sweden’s delegation to PACE**

On 26 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Swedish delegation. Discussions focused on Sweden’s application to become a member of NATO, Türkiye’s opposition to that application, and energy security in Europe. These discussions were continued in a subsequent meeting between the two delegations on 27 April 2023.

### **Meeting with Türkiye’s delegation to PACE**

On 26 April 2023, Canadian delegates met with members of the Turkish delegation. Delegates discussed the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, the conflict in Syria, Sweden’s NATO application and the then-upcoming elections in Türkiye.

### **Meeting with the United Kingdom’s delegation to PACE**

On 27 April, the United Kingdom’s (U.K.) delegation hosted Canadian delegates for lunch in the PACE dining room. Discussions included the indexing of U.K. pensions for Canadian residents, the coronation of King Charles III, relations with China, Canadian constitutionalism, and Sikh nationalism in India.

### **Canadian Interventions in Assembly Debates**

All delegates participated in the Assembly’s debates. They made six interventions during debates and tabled 13 speeches in writing.<sup>3</sup> The texts of delegates speeches are available on the PACE website.<sup>4</sup>

### **Monday, 24 April 2023**

[Mr. Sorbara](#) asked a question to Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, regarding how observers to PACE can make a meaningful contribution to the organization, in particular in its response to the war in Ukraine.

### **Tuesday, 25 April 2023**

---

<sup>2</sup> [Council of Europe, Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe \(Harpa, Reykjavík, Iceland - 16-17 May 2023\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> Where members are unable to deliver their speech due to a lack of time, PACE procedures allow for speeches to be submitted in writing and included in the record. See Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Rules of Procedure of the Assembly \(January 2023\)](#), rule 31.2.

<sup>4</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [“2023 – second part of the session,”](#) Verbatim listing by session.

[Mr. Bergeron](#) and [Mr. Sorbara](#) submitted their speeches in writing for the current affairs debate entitled “#RoadToReykjavik.” [Mr. Sorbara](#) also submitted a speech in writing for the debate on “European Convention on Human Rights and national constitutions.”

### **Wednesday, 26 April 2023**

[Senator Francis](#) gave a speech, and [Mr. Bergeron](#), [Mr. Sorbara](#) and [Senator Moncion](#) submitted speeches in writing for the debate on “Political strategies to prevent, prepare for, and face the consequences of natural disasters.” [Mr. Bergeron](#) gave a speech during the debate on “Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.”

### **Thursday, 27 April 2023**

[Mr. Bergeron](#) gave a speech, and [Mr. Sorbara](#), [Senator Downe](#) and [Senator Wells](#) submitted speeches in writing, for the debate under urgent procedure on “Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators.” [Mr. Sorbara](#) gave a speech, and [Mr. Bergeron](#) submitted a speech in writing, for a current affairs debate on “Russia’s role in escalating tensions in the Republic of Moldova.” [Senator Francis](#), [Senator Downe](#) and [Senator Wells](#) submitted speeches in writing for the debate on “Safeguarding democracy, rights and the environment in international trade.”

### **Friday, 28 April 2023**

[Senator Downe](#) gave a speech during the debate on “Youth and the media.”

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP  
President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

### **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Second Part of the 2023 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Strasbourg, France
<b>DATES</b>	From April 24 to 28, 2023

**DELEGATION**

SENATE  
Hon. Lucie Moncion  
Hon. David Wells  
Hon. Percy Downe  
Hon. Brian Francis

HOUSE OF  
COMMONS  
Stéphane Bergeron  
Francesco Sorbara

STAFF  
Jessica Kulka  
Scott McTaggart

**TRANSPORTATION** \$ 33,425.02

**ACCOMMODATION** \$ 13,093.00

**HOSPITALITY** \$ 0

**PER DIEMS** \$ 10,337.38

**OFFICIAL GIFTS** \$ 0

**MISCELLANEOUS** \$ 436.00

**TOTAL** \$ 57,291.40