

Canada – Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Europe

Report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CAEU)

16th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

Kiruna, Sweden

From March 20 to 22, 2024

Report

INTRODUCTION

A Canadian delegation attended the 16th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR) in Kiruna, Sweden from 20 to 22 March 2024. The Conference was hosted by the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament). Arctic parliamentary cooperation is facilitated by the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, which is held every two years and follows issues relevant to the work of the Arctic Council. Parliamentarians representing Arctic states also serve [on the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region](#) which meet several times a year.

The Canadian delegation included:

- Ms. Lori Idlout, Member of Parliament;
- Ms. Marilène Gill, Member of Parliament;
- The Honourable Gwen Boniface, Senator; and,
- The Honourable Senator Percy E. Downe, Senator.

The delegation also included Ms. Sara Fryer, Association Advisor, Education and Research, Library of Parliament and Ms. Jessica Kulka, Association Secretary, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association.

The Conference was attended by delegates from the following six Arctic states: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden along with representatives from international Indigenous organizations including the Gwi'chin Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Sámi Parliamentary Council and the Aleut International Association.

The main theme of the conference was civil security with sessions held on climate and waste management in the Arctic, Arctic youth perspectives, sustainable mining, and education and research. The delegation also met with Jason LaTorre, Canada's Ambassador to Sweden in Stockholm. Conference participants visited the LKAB iron ore mine located next to Kiruna and the Esrange Space Centre, a rocket range and research centre. Conference participants also visited the new Kiruna town hall where the urban planner and mayor gave a presentation on the progress and planning to relocate the old town from an area that is now unstable as a result of mining activities.

Members of the delegation held a bilateral meeting with Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, President of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden and staff, Tomas Kuhmunen and Marie Enoksson. They discussed the practice and economy of reindeer herding and their work in spatial mapping to demonstrate the extent of Sámi traditional territories. Ms. Gill spoke of the similarities between Sámi practices and those of First Nations in the Manicouagan region, where caribou are an important part of food security and the local economy.

At the conclusion of the conference, the delegates approved the 2024 Conference Statement, appended to this report as Appendix A.

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The conference opened on 21 March 2024 with speeches from a number of local, regional and national politicians including the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Dr. Andreas Norlén; Ms. Lotta Finstorp, County Governor, Norbotten, Sweden; Mr. Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, President of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden; and Ms. Aaja Chemnitz, Chair, Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.

A. CLIMATE AND WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE ARCTIC

The first session of the conference was related to climate and waste management. Professor Minik Rosing, Copenhagen University, argued that innovation occurring in the Arctic can provide solutions to global warming. For example, he explained that as Greenland's huge ice sheet thaws, rocks react with carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the ice sheet crushes the rock and creates a fine sediment that releases nutrients that help supplement poor soils. His research has shown that these minerals can help make agriculture more productive. In Ghana, the 'glacier rock flour' contributed to a 50% increase in crop yield.

Mr. Johan Kuylenstierna, Director General at Formas (a Swedish government research council for sustainable development), gave an overview of emerging priorities on waste management across Finland, Norway and Sweden. He said that partnerships between Arctic regions and the shipping industry enable remote communities to ship out recycling and solid waste. He noted that the Norwegian Parliament is looking at how to establish a sustainable tourism industry in the Arctic that does not have negative consequences on waste management. He also noted that the Finnish Parliament is considering introducing legislation on plastic waste.

Ms. Jessica Beldstra, Aleut International Association highlighted a project undertaken to find solutions regarding waste disposal in remote Arctic communities in Alaska. The Aleut International Association conducted a survey of solid waste management in remote Arctic communities.

Ms. Idlout asked the panelists about how Arctic states include Indigenous perspectives in the research processes related to waste management and climate change.

B. ARCTIC YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

Youth from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Greenland, Denmark reported their findings from a youth roundtable held prior to the conference with youth from Kiruna, Sweden. The youth representative from Finland is a Sámi reindeer herder and reported that mining can create job opportunities, but also noted that the North is seen by the South as a resource reserve. She explained that while wind and hydro power are considered green energy, these developments have negative effects on peoples' lives, including reindeer herding. The youth representative from Norway shared that Arctic youth want to be able to hand the Arctic over to the next generation in better condition than it is currently. While she noted the need for economic growth through responsible mining, she noted that industry should have to cooperate with local communities by funding better schools, transit and health care.

Housing affordability and availability in the Arctic was a key challenge raised by panelists. The youth representative from Sweden noted that managing waste from the mine should be a key priority for industry. She also observed that Kiruna was dependent on the mine for employment and that economic diversification should be a priority.

C. BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE MINING

Ms. Maria Sunér, CEO of SveMin, an industry association for mining in Sweden, opened the session on sustainable mining and explained that with 12 metal mines in operation, Sweden is the largest mining economy in Europe. She explained that the European Union (EU) uses 25% of all metals produced globally, however the EU only produces 3% of all metals. She noted there is a looming mismatch between the need for minerals for a green transition and the ability to produce these critical minerals. The EU's recent legislation pertaining to critical raw materials will enable efficient mining permitting processes and increased exploration in Europe. Sweden has large deposits of critical minerals in its Arctic Region.

Ms. Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir, MP for Iceland provided an example of sustainable economic development in her region where a smelter was established that effectively employs locals and supports small and medium enterprises in the area.

Ms. Pirita Näkkäläjärvi, President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council highlighted how reindeer herding remains a way of making contributions to the broader society and set out some key ways to respect the rights of Sámi by respecting their rights to free, prior and informed consent around resource development to contribute to healthier societies overall.

Dr. Glenn Berggörd, Vice Chair of the Regional Executive Board, Region Norrbotten, Sweden discussed the establishment of a doctor education program at the regional hospital to attract young people to return to the region for employment.

Ms. Gill made a statement about Swedish-Canadian trade relationships. She highlighted the similarities of development occurring in Kiruna and a prospective project in Sept-Iles, Quebec by H2Green Steel, a Swedish firm. If the development were to move forward, it could grow the population of Sept-Iles substantially, requiring more housing, schools and healthcare, similar to Kiruna.

D. CIVIL SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS

On 22 March 2024, the conference began with a discussion about civil security across Arctic states. Ms. Chemnitz, MP, Denmark described some of the steps Greenland is taking to secure critical infrastructure like investing in cyber security and the stability of electrical grid due to a recent power outage in Nuuk, Greenland.

Mr. Bård Ludvig Thorheim, MP for Norway argued that there needs to be synergy between the development of industry and security policy in the Arctic. He gave examples of the need to protect and develop transportation infrastructure, such as ports, which would benefit both sectors. He noted there could be more safety and stability with new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, like Sweden.

Mr. Johna Berffren, State Secretary to the Minister for Civil Defence in Sweden discussed Sweden's recent accession to NATO. He noted that Sweden is preparing to enhance the country's civil security and have established two Ministers of Defence to coordinate between military and societal defence. Sweden is examining its supply chain to make improvements that will need to involve the private sector.

Ms. Idlout highlighted the Indigenous peoples' contributions to civil security in Canada's Arctic. She noted that Canada had recently established an office of Indigenous Science with a Chief Indigenous Science Advisor. She also noted that Indigenous knowledge is used to inform ice-breaking strategies in the Arctic Ocean and highlighted the importance of the Canadian Rangers, who in many communities in Nunavut are entirely Inuit. The Canadian Rangers play an important role in civil security in Canada and contribute to many initiatives like search and rescue efforts.

Senator Downe asked a question of the panel regarding Sweden's participation in NATO.

E. EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The conference concluded with a panel of speakers on education and research. Mr. Lars Kullerud, President of the University of the Arctic, which has 185 universities as members focussing research on 65 thematic issues pertaining the Arctic argued that state funding for Arctic research is important. Ms. Mari Leena, MP for Finland highlighted the importance of having post-secondary institutions in Arctic regions. She noted that she moved to the North to attend university. She noted there are challenges in providing quality education in sparsely populated areas. Mr. Evon Peter, from the Gwich'in Council International and faculty member at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, highlighted the work he is doing to prepare educational materials to teach the Gwich'in language, and the importance of place-based and culturally appropriate education, particularly in remote areas. Ms. Maria Strang Munkhaug, youth representative from Norway talked about recent research that demonstrated the difference in regional primary school results between the northern and southern regions.

Annex 1



ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARIANS

THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

20th – 23rd March 2024, Kiruna, Sweden

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

As the dynamics in the Arctic are shifting in light of climate change and the current security situation, Arctic Parliamentarians convene to address the multifaceted challenges in the Arctic region. Our considerations center on topics of both current and future relevance to the Arctic and its people: climate, research, and employment, with continued commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, security, and the well-being of Arctic residents, including Indigenous Peoples.

The Arctic Parliamentarians strongly support the work of the Norwegian chairship of the Arctic Council to secure Arctic Council as the main arena for Arctic cooperation.

As elected representatives from Canada, Denmark/Greenland/Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and in collaboration with the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, we highlight the following:

Climate and Waste Management

Acknowledging the existential threat posed by climate change, we advocate for joint efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, preserve biodiversity, and combat pollution in the Arctic region.

We call on the Arctic governments to prioritize reduction of black carbon and methane emissions as it will have strong short-term effects on climate change in the Arctic, such as melting sea ice and permafrost.

We urge Arctic governments to embrace renewable energy solutions, develop zero emission off grid communities in the Arctic and implement stringent waste management policies such as transportation of waste from Arctic communities and tourism facilities, and to promote circular economies and sustainable practices that minimize ecological footprint.

We further urge the Arctic governments to strengthen joint efforts to minimize marine plastic pollution and call upon non-Arctic states to intensify their effort to minimize marine littering which by wind and ocean currents ends up having severe negative impacts on the ecosystems and wildlife of the Arctic region.

Indigenous voices must be included in decision-making processes, empowering local communities to lead initiatives for environmental conservation.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

We acknowledge that within the Arctic there are differences in how the rights of Indigenous Peoples are upheld.

We see the effects of wrongdoings against Arctic Indigenous Peoples in the past, such as boarding schools, forced displacement, involuntary contraception and other historical injustices in various countries. These practices have contributed to intergenerational trauma and ongoing mental health and addiction crises in many Arctic communities. We emphasize the need for opportunities for today's population to collaborate and plan together for the future.

In those parts of the Arctic where Indigenous Peoples have unequal access to society's institutions, and lack forms of self-determination, we call on all levels of government to work together to create equal opportunities for all inhabitants of the Arctic. Joint solutions should be found between the state and the indigenous population.

Business and employment

Recognizing the economic imperatives of Arctic development, we emphasize the importance of fostering a competent business environment that balances economic growth with social responsibility and environmental consideration.

We appreciate the close cooperation with Arctic Economic Council to promote sustainable business development in the Arctic.

We call on Arctic governments to increase the promotion of inclusive economic policies and workforce development strategies that prioritize business development, local employment, housing, empower Indigenous and local enterprises, and ensure equitable distribution of benefits derived from Arctic resources and industries.

Research and Education

Emphasizing the role of research and education in fostering resilience and innovation, we underscore the imperative of investing in science, technological advancement, and knowledge exchange within the Arctic. We treasure the close cooperation with the University of the Arctic and highlight the importance of continued collaboration with Arctic research institutions.

We urge Arctic governments to work for the establishment of interdisciplinary research platforms and academic partnerships across the nations of the Arctic to equip Arctic residents, including Indigenous youth, with the skills and expertise necessary to address emerging challenges. We recognize the importance of traditional Indigenous knowledge and the contributions made by hunters, trappers, and fishers. Traditional knowledge should be on-par with scientific research in guiding decision-making.

Civil security and preparedness

Recognizing the imperative of safeguarding Arctic territories in this time of increasing geopolitical attention, we underscore the necessity for cohesive security frameworks that prioritize collaboration and information exchange among the Arctic nations to maintain the region as an area of low tension. Ensuring food security is an important factor for health among the Arctic residents, including Indigenous Peoples.

We call on Arctic governments to strengthen the reinforcement of search and rescue capabilities, infrastructure development, and disaster response mechanisms tailored to the Arctic's unique environment. Emphasis should be placed on fostering partnerships with local communities like the Indigenous communities to integrate traditional knowledge into emergency preparedness plans.

In conclusion, we, the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, urge Arctic governments to take our recommendations into account and translate collective aspirations into concrete actions that safeguard the Arctic's environment, uphold the rights and interests of Arctic residents, including reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and foster sustainable development for generations to come.

Arctic Parliamentarians welcomes the friendly offer of the United States to host the Arctic Parliamentary Conference in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Francesco Sorbara, MP

President, Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

ACTIVITY

16th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

DESTINATION

Kiruna, Sweden

DATES From March 20 to 22, 2024

DELEGATION

SENATE Hon. Gwen Boniface
Hon. Percy Downe

HOUSE OF COMMONS Marilène Gill
Lori Idlout

STAFF Jessica Kulka
Sara Fryer

TRANSPORTATION \$ 22,925.74

ACCOMMODATION \$ 8,927.55

HOSPITALITY \$ 0.00

PER DIEMS \$ 3,862.69

MISCELLANEOUS \$ 553.27

TOTAL \$ **36,269.25**