

Canada - Europe  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
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**Report of the Canadian Delegation  
respecting its participation in the Second Part  
of the 2014 Ordinary Session  
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,  
and its Parliamentary Mission to the Organisation  
for Economic Co-Operation and Development,  
to the Holy See and Italy,  
the next country to hold the rotating Presidency  
of the Council of the European Union**

**Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association**

**Strasbourg and Paris, France  
and Vatican and Rome, Italy**

**April 7-16, 2014**

# Report

## INTRODUCTION

From 5 to 11 April 2014, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association (CEPA) sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Strasbourg, France to participate in the Second Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The delegation was led by Mr. David Tilson, M.P., President of CEPA, Hon. Percy Downe, Senator; Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator; Mr. Sean Casey, M.P., Mr. Corneliu Chisu, M.P.; and Ms. Nicole Turmel, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Maxime Ricard, Association Secretary, and Ms. Karin Phillips, Advisor. On 10 April 2014, three members of the delegation, including Mr. Tilson, Mr. Casey and Senator Rivard, also participated in meetings with representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, France, and with Her Excellency Judith LaRocque, Canada's Ambassador to the OECD.

On 11 April 2014, the delegation travelled to Rome, Italy, and on 12 April 2014, it participated in a bilateral mission to the Holy See, where the delegation met with His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Manberti, Secretary for Relations with States for the Vatican. The delegation also received a tour of the Apostolic Palace and the Vatican Museum. During its mission to the Holy See, the delegation was accompanied by Father Pierre Paul, Ecclesiastic Councillor, and Ms. Marcella Damiani, Political Officer from Canada's Embassy to the Holy See.

From 14-16 April 2014, the delegation remained in Rome and participated in meetings related to Italy's upcoming term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union (EU) beginning in July 2014. While in Rome, the delegation was hosted by His Excellency Peter McGovern, Ambassador of Canada to Italy, Ms. Barbara Michelangeli, Political and Economic Officer, and Mr. Marc-Antoine Dumas, Political and Economic Counsellor from Canada's Embassy to Italy, who also accompanied the delegation during their meetings.

Prior to departure, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN). In addition, the delegation held a working lunch with His Excellency Gian Lorenzo Cornado, Italy's Ambassador to Canada, and Mr. Manfred Auster, Minister-Counsellor from the EU's Delegation to Canada.

This report provides an overview of the delegation's participation in the Second Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It also summarizes meetings with representatives of the OECD and the Holy See, as well as meetings in Rome related to Italy's priorities for its term as rotating President of the Council of the EU.

## SECOND PART OF THE 2014 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### A. Overview of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation which aims to:<sup>1</sup>

- protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity;
- find common solutions to the challenges facing European society: such as discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, bioethics and cloning, terrorism, trafficking in human beings, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, violence against children; and
- consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe now has 47 member countries from the Azores to Azerbaijan, and from Iceland to Cyprus, with Montenegro joining as its newest member in May 2007.<sup>2</sup> The Council's main objective is to promote and defend democratic development and human rights, and to hold member governments accountable for their performance in these areas. However, it is also very active in fostering international cooperation and policy coordination in a number of other areas, including legal cooperation, education, culture, heritage, environmental protection, health care, and social cohesion. The Council of Europe is responsible for the development of more than 200 European treaties or conventions, many of which are open to non-member states, in policy areas such as human rights, the fight against organized crime, the prevention of torture, data protection and cultural co-operation.<sup>3</sup>

The Council's main institutions are the Committee of Ministers (its decision making body, composed of member states' foreign ministers or their deputies), the Parliamentary Assembly, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.<sup>4</sup>

The Parliamentary Assembly consists of 636 members (318 representatives and 318 substitutes), who are elected or appointed by the national parliaments of the 47 Council of Europe member states from among their members.<sup>5</sup> The parliaments of Canada, Israel and Mexico currently hold observer status with PACE.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe, [Our Objectives](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> For a complete list of the Council of Europe's treaties, see:  
<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeTraites.asp?CM=8&CL=ENG>

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, "[The Council of Europe in brief](#)"

<sup>5</sup> PACE, "[In brief: the Democratic Conscience of Greater Europe](#)"

The Assembly elects the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the judges of the European Court of Human Rights and the Council's Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>6</sup> It is consulted on all new international treaties drafted by the Council, holds the Council and member governments accountable, engages in studies on a range of issues of common interest to Europeans and provides a common forum for debate for national parliamentarians. The Assembly has played an important role in the process of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe and actively monitors developments in member countries, including national elections. It meets four times a year in Strasbourg, with committee meetings taking place more frequently. Council and Assembly decisions and debates are often reported widely in the European media.

The Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly bring together policy and decision makers from a range of politically, culturally, and geographically diverse countries.<sup>7</sup> Together, the Council and Assembly provide the primary forum for the formation of a trans-European political community committed to democracy and human rights. The Parliamentary Assembly also provides parliamentary oversight functions for several key international organizations, including the OECD, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Organization for Migration.

This wide-ranging role in international policy making and in the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights makes the Council and Assembly an important venue for pursuing and advancing Canada's multilateral and bilateral engagement in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Canada is an observer to both the Committee of Ministers, where it has participated actively in a number of policy areas (the other observers are the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the United States) and the Parliamentary Assembly (where the other observers are Israel and Mexico). Since gaining observer status, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association has sent delegations to participate in sessions of PACE, which occur four times per year.

## **B. Overview of the Second Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

The fall session included a full order of business with a wide range of topics being debated in committees,<sup>9</sup> political groups<sup>10</sup> and in the Assembly.<sup>11</sup> The Assembly held regular debates on the following topics:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), "[Powers of the Assembly](#)"

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> DFATD, "[Canada and the Council of Europe](#)"

<sup>9</sup> There are 7 regular PACE committees: the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy; the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights; the Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons; the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media; the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination; and the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe.

- Progress report of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly;
- Free debate;
- Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe;
- Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- The situation and rights of traditional national minorities in Europe;
- Joint debate on “Improving user protection and security in cyberspace” and “The right to Internet access”;
- Debate under urgent procedure on “Recent developments in Ukraine: threats to the functioning of democratic institutions”;
- Access to nationality and the effective implementation of the European Convention on Nationality;
- Reconsideration on substantive grounds of the previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation;
- Urgent need to deal with new failures to co-operate with the European Court of Human Rights;
- Protection of minors against the excesses of sects;
- Decent work for all;
- Refugees and the right to work; and
- Ending child poverty in Europe.

For detailed information about the session, the transcripts and summaries of all the debates, reports discussed, and the resolutions and recommendations adopted are available on the Parliamentary Assembly’s website.

### **C. Canadian Activities during the Session**

The Canadian delegation participated actively in debates and committees held during the Second Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of PACE. In addition to its participation in

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<sup>10</sup> A political group is the equivalent of a parliamentary party or caucus. There are five political groups in PACE: the Socialist Group (SOC), the Group of the European People’s Party (EPP/CD), the European Democratic Group (EDG), the Liberal, Democratic and Reformers Group (ALDE), and the Group of the Unified European Left (UEL).

<sup>11</sup> Regular Assembly debates focus on a draft resolution (a decision or statement by the Assembly) and/or recommendation (a proposal addressed to the Committee of Ministers), as well as an explanatory memorandum, which are prepared by a rapporteur for the relevant standing committee. The committee adopts and usually amends the resolution prior to the Assembly debate. Assembly debates open with a statement from the rapporteur (s), followed by statements from representatives of the five political groups, after which the debate is opened to other speakers. Speakers have to register in advance. Speakers unable to participate in the debated due to time constraints can submit their intervention in writing, so it becomes part of the official record.

<sup>12</sup> The Agenda of the session is available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20340&lang=en>

debates and committees, the delegation received a briefing from Mr. Alain Hauser from the Mission of Canada to the European Union on recent developments within PACE and the EU more generally. The sections below summarize the delegation's participation in PACE debates, as well as other meetings held during the course of the session.

## **1. Interventions in Assembly Debates**

Canadian delegates participated actively in Assembly debates, giving a total of seven speeches. Because of time limits placed upon debates, some delegates were unable to present their views during the course of the debate. However, their speeches were submitted and included as part of the official record of the debate. The topics of debate and the text of the Canadian delegation's interventions are provided verbatim below.<sup>13</sup>

### **Free Debate**

Ms. Turmel made the following intervention in the "Free Debate":

I thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to speak on the constant difficulties that women come up against and on gender equality in the labour market. It is with pleasure that I deal with the subject because gender equality is a fight that has been at the heart of my political commitment. The undermining of gender equality, particularly in the labour market, is an important issue. It is not just a fundamental right – our economies need the expertise and dynamism of women.

In Canada the gap has lessened in the past 20 years between the rate of participation in the labour market of women and that of men. None the less, women have much lower salaries. In 2011 their annual revenue was only 67.7% of the annual revenue of their male colleagues. That situation leads to a loss of revenue, which could be as high 125 billion Canadian dollars.

It has been shown that women are more likely to choose a career that makes it possible for them to reconcile work and their family responsibilities and that they are more likely to choose part-time work. We can see from the polls that 12% of women have chosen part-time work in order to be able to deal with their children or other members of the family, whereas only 3% of men follow that example. The decision to work part-time means a drop in annual income for women.

Other inequalities that women are the victim of at work are sometimes much more subtle. We see that women make progress much less rapidly than men at work. Before they get to the top of the hierarchy, they all too often come up against the glass ceiling. For example, negative stereotypes persist with regard

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<sup>13</sup> All speeches delivered by delegates, whether delegates of member or observer delegations become part of the verbatim record of the proceedings of the Assembly and made available to the public [http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/nwCRListingSession\\_EN.asp](http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/nwCRListingSession_EN.asp)

to the aptitude of girls and women in maths and the sciences. To help us to overcome that, we feel that it is necessary to have an affordable child care service. It would also be good to benefit from access to collective negotiations or collective bargaining. The gap between the hourly rates paid to women and those paid to men is greater in the case of non-trades union work.

Finally, we should take note of what has happened in Quebec in ensuring obligations to put in place rules and regulations concerning any undermining of gender equality. It is thanks to the courage and persistence of the latest generation of women that they have achieved certain victories on the road to equality.

As a result of time constraints placed upon the debate, Mr. Tilson's intervention was submitted as part of the official record of the debate. It is reproduced below:

My comments today focus on Canada's objections to the EU's regulation prohibiting the trade in seal products, which was introduced in response to public moral concerns regarding the welfare of seals.

Canada objects to the EU's ethical concerns regarding the seal hunt, because they rest on misinformation about the nature of the seal hunt in Canada – specifically the false assumption that the seal hunt is inhumane. I am sure you have all seen posters or pamphlets decrying the Canadian seal hunt which picture baby white-coat seals. Let me be clear: white-coat seals are not hunted in Canada; the practice has been banned since 1987. It is this kind of misinformation that forms the basis of the European Union ban.

In Canada, sealers must follow a strictly enforced three-step process, which ensures that animals are killed quickly and humanely. This process is considered more humane than most other methods around the globe of slaughtering animals. Let me point out that there are a number of European Union member states which also carry out hunts, culls, and nuisance killings of their own seal populations, such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the United Kingdom, as well as others. None of these states has standards as stringent as those in Canada.

Furthermore, although the European Union's ban on seal products contains an exemption for seal products from traditional hunts conducted by Inuit, the Inuit themselves have stated that this exemption is ineffective, as the mere existence of the ban reduces the demand for all seal products. Indeed, once the implementation of the European Union ban began, revenues from the sale of seal pelts in Nunavut dropped by 75%.

Finally, we also believe that the European Union measure makes a discriminatory distinction between the Inuit seal hunt conducted for subsistence

purposes and the commercial seal hunt conducted by our rural coastal communities in eastern Canada.

For these reasons, Canada and Norway have challenged the ban at the World Trade Organization. In November 2013, a World Trade Organization panel agreed with Canada and Norway that the exceptions in the European Union's seal product ban are discriminatory against non-European Union seal products. However, the panel supported the European Union's view that the ban itself could be justified on public moral concerns.

As Canada moves together with Norway to appeal against this decision, I ask that this Assembly remain cognisant of the very dire impact that this measure continues to have on northern and coastal communities in Canada.

### **Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe**

Mr. Tilson made the following intervention in the debate on “Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe”:

I thank the rapporteur for his examination of the role that prostitution laws can play in addressing human trafficking. This debate proves timely, as my country, Canada, is in the process of re-examining its prostitution laws. Human trafficking is a terrible crime and one that represents a fundamental violation of the human rights of its victims.

Under Canada's criminal code, human trafficking is defined as the “recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements” of an individual for the purposes of exploiting that person. In February 2013, there were 77 ongoing prosecutions in Canada related to these provisions, over 90% of which were related to domestic trafficking in the sex trade. However, there is also increasing evidence of human trafficking related to forced labour, often involving foreign nationals. The majority of the victims of human trafficking in Canada continue to be women and children. Often, they are also members of our society's most vulnerable groups: aboriginal peoples, migrants and new immigrants, and those who face socio-economic disadvantages. To address this scourge, the Government of Canada has introduced a national action plan to combat human trafficking, which focuses on raising awareness, assistance for victims and enhancing the investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

Given the possible linkages between human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and prostitution, I agree with the draft resolution that we should also examine how prostitution laws could be used to combat human trafficking. Traditionally, Canada has adopted a hybrid approach to adult prostitution, where prostitution itself is legal but many of the activities associated with it are



criminalised. In December 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada found that certain provisions of the criminal code relating to prostitution were in violation of prostitutes' rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As such, the Supreme Court struck down a number of prostitution-related provisions and gave the Canadian Parliament one year to bring forward new legislation. At this time, government consultations are under way.

As we move forward in re-evaluating our prostitution laws, I believe that Canada should consider examining the Nordic model, which criminalises the purchasing of sexual services by clients and individuals who exploit sex workers, while decriminalising prostitutes themselves. As the rapporteur points out, studies have shown that countries that have adopted this model have fewer victims of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Not only does the Nordic model effectively reduce the demand for sexual services; it also recognises prostitution as a form of violence against women. As our Supreme Court has noted, for many, prostitution is not a meaningful choice made by individuals, but one that is often forced by circumstance. We must therefore support measures whose goal is the elimination of prostitution along with all other forms of sexual exploitation.

### **Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic**

As a result of time limitations, Mr. Chisu's speech for the debate on "Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic" could not be delivered but was included in the official record of the debate and is presented below:

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to express Canada's support for granting the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic Partnership for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. I would like to thank the rapporteur for his hard work on this report and his favourable view on the request for Partner for Democracy status of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.

As noted by the previous rapporteur, the Kyrgyz Republic is the only country in the region to enjoy genuine political pluralism and free and fair democratic elections. Indeed, as an Assembly, it is important to recognise the progress that the Kyrgyz Republic has made since the revolution of 2010, including the adoption of the new constitution, which establishes the republic as the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia. In addition, the country's electoral code promotes the participation of women in politics through the establishment of a gender quota for the lists of candidates for political parties. By requesting this status, the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic is expressing its commitment to continuing to align its values and principles with those of the Council of Europe in

areas such as democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and freedoms.

While these developments are promising, the draft resolution acknowledges that significant challenges to this fledgling democracy remain, including widespread corruption, the lack of an independent and impartial judiciary system, on-going inter-ethnic tensions and concerns surrounding child labour. Canada expects the granting of the status to encourage the parliament to play a more prominent role in the process of reforms. Granting the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic Partnership for Democracy status will allow the country to draw on the Council of Europe's expertise in democratic development and the rule of law to help address some of these issues.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe's on-going engagement with the Kyrgyz Republic will also serve to complement the efforts of other multilateral organisations contributing to political and economic stability in the country, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In line with the draft resolution, the Government of Canada provides support for democratic development in the country by funding local initiatives aimed at promoting ethnic tolerance, which are undertaken by the very active Kyrgyz community through non-governmental organisations. It is important to note that civil society activists in Kyrgyzstan also see the parliament's request for Partner for Democracy status as an opportunity to reinforce their efforts to promote democratic values in the country.

Let me conclude by saying that Canada looks forward to continuing to work with the Kyrgyz Republic in the area of good governance.

### **The Situation and Rights of Traditional National Minorities in Europe**

Mr. Chisu made the following intervention in the debate on "The Situation and Rights of Traditional National Minorities in Europe":

I thank the rapporteur for highlighting the importance of protecting the rights of national minorities, including traditional national minorities, in Europe. Indeed, throughout European and world history, the failure to protect minority rights has given rise to many civil conflicts and two world wars. We need look no further than the events in the Balkans and Eastern Europe to understand that respect for and protection of minority rights remain fundamental to peace and stability in Europe today.

The draft resolution identifies ways in which states can protect the rights of national minorities through the implementation of international legal frameworks;

the establishment of self-government arrangements; and the promotion of the use of minority languages in education and in the public sphere. In Canada, we refer not to traditional national minorities, but to our founding peoples: Aboriginal, French and British, whose rights are specifically protected in the constitution of Canada through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 16 of the charter establishes English and French as Canada's two official languages, granting them equal status, rights and privileges in the Parliament and the Government of Canada, as well as in the courts established by parliament. In addition, the charter grants minority education rights to both English and French-speaking communities, if they are living in a minority situation in their province or territory.

The Government of Canada supports the realisation of these rights by providing funding for educational initiatives in official language communities and for the development of artistic, cultural and heritage products. The rights of Aboriginal peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, are protected through both the charter and the constitution. The aim of those provisions is to preserve the cultures, identities, customs, traditions and languages of Aboriginal peoples.

In line with the draft resolution, the Government of Canada has also endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, thus reaffirming "its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples at home and abroad." To support the full participation of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian life, the Government of Canada funds initiatives such as the development of Aboriginal broadcast programmes and projects aimed at the preservation of languages and cultures. We believe that the linguistic and cultural plurality that has existed since the founding of our country has helped us over the centuries to forge a society that also embraces immigrants from many different cultures. For these reasons, we have placed the concept of "unity in diversity" at the very foundation of our state, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which includes the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism as part of Canada's heritage and identity.

### **Joint Debate on "Improving user protection and security in cyberspace" and "The right to Internet Access"**

Because of time restrictions placed on the debate, Mr. Casey, Senator Downe and Senator Rivard were unable to intervene in the joint debate on "Improving user protection and security in cyberspace" and "The right to Internet Access." Their written texts were submitted as part of the official record of the debate and are presented below:

Mr. Casey – As recognised by the rapporteur, Ms. Pelkonen, the Internet plays a crucial role in accessing basic and civil rights, and Internet access for all must be a public policy goal to be pursued by our governments.

Electronic services, in addition to, and sometimes in replacement of, traditional services have consistently grown in recent years, and are affecting a variety of areas of daily life, including the essential services offered by governments. We have seen recent examples in Canada with the closure of government offices that once provided in person services to immigrants, veterans and taxpayers in some regions. Home delivery of mail in urban centres is also now being phased out.

Without equality in Internet access, some groups within our societies could be excluded from the benefits that this technology brings, and could therefore be negatively affected. For example, the elderly without access to the Internet could experience difficulties in obtaining some necessary government services. The Internet has the potential to enhance the ability of citizens in all of our countries to contribute to, and participate in our societies, and to facilitate freedom of expression.

In 1994, recognising that some people did not have the financial resources needed to purchase a computer or Internet connection, the Government of Canada developed a national initiative: the Community Access Program. This initiative, which was created with a view to ensuring that Canada's entire population would have access to the Internet, provided affordable access to computers and an Internet connection, as well as skilled training.

Since the initiative's establishment, more and more people in Canada now have an Internet connection at home. This led to a decision by the Canadian government to phase out the Community Access Program a few years ago. The result is that Internet access is more difficult for those in rural areas and on the margins of Canadian society.

Since 1994, Internet access in Canada has increased significantly. Fixed and mobile broadband is now available in approximately 99% of all households in Canada. However, Canada is a vast country and while 100% of households in urban areas have access to the Internet, only 85% of households living in rural areas have the same opportunity. Moreover, Canada's regions vary in terms of the availability of broadband speed. Recognising the importance of Internet service for communication, the Government of Canada has recently introduced new rules that should result in improved universal Internet performance target speeds by the end of next year.

I would like to thank the rapporteur for her work; I share with her the same hope that Internet access will continue to improve and be available to all people in our countries in the coming years.

Senator Downe - Technological developments, especially in the fields of digital communications and the Internet, have transformed societies and given new and expanded meanings to the terms “freedom of expression” and “freedom of assembly.” To deny citizens access to the Internet is to deny them vital new means of expression and assembly.

Just recently in a speech to students at Beijing’s Peking University, United States First Lady Michelle Obama spoke of how freedom of expression and open access to information, especially online, is a universal right. She said that the power of technology “can open up the entire world and expose us to ideas and innovations we never could have imagined.”

To this end, I am pleased that, in response to a recent attempt to block Twitter in Turkey, the Turkish president posted on Twitter that “a complete ban on social media platforms cannot be approved” and that he hopes “this implementation won’t last long.” He later described the ban as “an unpleasant situation for such a developed country as Turkey, which has weight in the region and which is negotiating with the European Union.”

Internet access is not only crucial for freedom of expression and assembly; without Internet access, citizens also lose educational, cultural and commercial opportunities. As the report before the Council of Europe notes, several global media companies have formed internet.org with the mission of bringing the Internet to “an additional 4 billion people worldwide, in order to overcome barriers in developing countries to connect in cyberspace.”

Canada has an objective of universal, high-speed Internet access and has focused on several problems that pose hurdles to that objective. The most prominent problem addressed has been the digital divide between urban and rural Canadians, but other divides of concern include those based on gender, income and education. An ongoing problem in Canada is the continuing high cost of Internet and wireless service.

We support moves to promote universal Internet access and to put in place domestic policies consistent with a principle noted in the report: “States should recognize the fundamental right to Internet access in law and in practice.”

Senator Rivard – I am pleased to attend this sitting of the Assembly concerning the right to Internet access, which is a subject that concerns my country very directly.

Ensuring broad access to the Internet is one of the Government of Canada's priorities, and steps have been taken to enable a growing number of Canadians to enjoy Internet access in their homes or through public access points.

Between June 2009 and April 2012, the Broadband Canada Program extended broadband access to 218,000 Canadian households that did not have it previously. Like the draft resolution that is currently before us, the program's proponents believed that Internet access is essential to participating in today's economy, as it "enables citizens, businesses and institutions to access information, services and opportunities that could otherwise be out of reach." The Government of Canada's 2014 budget includes commitments to extend this service to some 280,000 additional Canadian households.

However, the road to universal and affordable Internet access is littered with obstacles. In a country as big as ours, where the population is concentrated mainly in the south, market forces make this objective difficult to achieve. According to a study by Harvard's Berkman Centre, in 2010 Canada ranked 20th and 25th out of 30 OECD countries in terms of subscription prices and speed, respectively. Regional access to service continues to be uneven. In a report released in June 2010, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications addressed the issue of universality and recommended that the government's digital strategy define "universal as 100 per cent of its citizens."

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which regulates and monitors telecommunications in the public interest, set universal speed targets that should be available to all Canadians within 18 months. These targets are 5 megabits per second for downloading and 1 megabit per second for uploading. Working with the Industry Minister, the Commission has taken steps to deregulate the broadband market and make Internet access more affordable for all Canadians. In addition, ongoing technological advances are expanding broadband access to Canada's remote regions.

The ultimate goal is to provide Internet access everywhere for everyone, and this goal demands ongoing cooperation between the public and private sectors. The Government of Canada will continue its efforts to bring partners together to pursue this goal. Let's hope that the member States of the Council of Europe also see the need to achieve this same objective.

**Recent Developments in Ukraine as part of the debate under urgent procedure entitled, "Debate on Recent Developments in Ukraine: Threats to the Functioning of Democratic Institutions":**

Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to speak about the events unfolding in Ukraine, which Canadians continue to monitor very closely and with great concern. I also thank the rapporteurs for their work.

Canada condemns Russia's military intervention in Crimea in the strongest terms. Indeed, Canada sees Russian actions as a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, Canada does not recognise the outcome of the referendum on the status of Crimea that took place on 16 March 2014, and fully supports the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly of 27 March 2014 that calls upon states not to recognise changes in the status of the Crimea region. Not only was the referendum not authorised by Ukraine, but the circumstances surrounding it violated democratic standards, as reflected in the recent legal opinion of the Council of Europe's own Venice Commission.

Within that context, we must commend the Ukrainian Government's restraint in the face of such provocations. As it moves forward in its efforts to build a free, democratic and prosperous society, we believe that the protection of minority rights should remain paramount. Canada has been working very closely with the Ukrainian Government to help achieve those objectives by addressing challenges facing the country's democratic institutions.

For example, at the request of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Canada has frozen the assets of 18 members of the former Yanukovich regime, as well as those of his family members and close associates, to help fight corruption and support democratic reforms and accountability in the country. In addition, we have imposed sanctions on Crimean and Russian individuals responsible for the crisis in Crimea. As part of our international development programme in Ukraine, we are supporting projects that increase equitable access to justice for men and women, particularly those from marginalised groups, as well as efforts to build a transparent and fair electoral environment. We have also announced that we will provide Ukraine with a \$200 million loan guarantee to help restore stability in the country.

Those actions have not been without consequences, however. In response to Canadian sanctions, Russia has banned the entry of 13 Canadians, including senior government officials, six members of parliament – three from the Conservative Party of Canada, two from the Liberal Party of Canada and one from the New Democratic Party – and a leader of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora. Our House of Commons has remained united in condemning those and other actions taken by Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. We also remain united with Ukrainians as they address the very real threats facing their democratic institutions.

The way forward for all parties involved in the crisis lies in ongoing and inclusive political dialogue at all levels, including here at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

As a result of time limitations placed upon the debate, Ms. Turmel was unable to intervene in the debate. However, the text of her speech was submitted to the official record:

I would like to thank the chair for allowing me to take part in this important debate on the crisis that is devastating Ukraine.

Like my colleagues, I would like to emphasize that all Canadian parliamentarians support the people of Ukraine, who are grappling not only with political and economic issues but also with threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country.

On March 3, 2014, the Canadian House of Commons passed a unanimous motion strongly condemning Russian intervention in Ukraine.

The members of the House of Commons also called on Russia to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty as per the commitments in the 1994 Budapest Declaration and its obligations under international law.

At the same time, we reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Ukraine government.

I would also like to reiterate that the international community, including Canada, does not recognize the results of the March 16 referendum on the status of Crimea, as demonstrated by the resolution on Ukraine's territorial integrity passed by the United Nations General Assembly on March 24, 2014.

As the Council of Europe's Venice Commission pointed out, the situation in Crimea did not allow for a referendum that meets European democratic standards, particularly the requirement for negotiations involving all parties.

In addition to having its sovereignty seriously threatened, Ukraine has long-standing problems, such as corruption, that have hampered its political and economic development.

The recent agreement between the International Monetary Fund and the Ukrainian government on a program of economic reforms indicates that the government is committed to addressing the problems that hamper the functioning of its political and economic institutions.

The objectives of this program include strengthening governance, increasing transparency and stimulating the business climate.

I am also pleased to note that this economic reform program also protects the most vulnerable members of Ukrainian society, and this must remain a priority.



As Ukraine addresses its problems, it must maintain an open political dialogue that involves all members of society and reflects the country's cultural, linguistic and geographic diversity.

As we seek a solution to this crisis, the international community must advocate for a culture of inclusive political dialogue—a culture that encourages the participation of all members of society instead of excluding them.

As such, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe must remain an open forum in which members and observers can discuss, promote mutual understanding and, most of all, find a peaceful solution to the problems that concern us today.

### **The Protection of Minors against the Excesses of Sects**

Because of time limitations placed upon the debate, Ms. Turmel's intervention was submitted as part of the official record of the debate on "The protection of minors against the excesses of sects":

In Canada, as in other countries around the world, these sensitive issues make the headlines and are debated in our legislatures.

At the heart of this debate is the conflict between child protection and the right to religious freedom. Canadian authorities are currently dealing with a case involving Lev Tahor, an ultra-orthodox Jewish community. An investigation into this community conducted in 2013 led to allegations of forced marriage, lack of appropriate education and neglect.

The Quebec provincial government ordered the children in question to be placed in temporary foster care. In response, the members of the Lev Tahor community claimed that their right to religious freedom had been violated and they left the country.

Section 2(a) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. However, the courts have ruled that, in some cases, the best interest of the child takes precedence over the right to religious freedom. For example, the Ontario court of appeal previously ruled that a child required State protection because his parents refused to allow him to receive a blood transfusion. They are Jehovah's Witnesses, and blood transfusions are against their religious beliefs.

However, the situation becomes more complicated in cases of older children's right to religious freedom, because decisions regarding their best interest must take into account their opinions.

In a similar case involving a 14-year-old girl who had refused a blood transfusion for religious reasons, the Supreme Court of Canada stated that an analysis of the best interest of the child must also include an analysis of the young person's ability to make decisions in a mature and independent manner.

While court rulings show that the best interest of the child remains paramount in cases involving religious sects, the case of the children of Lev Tahor indicates that the real challenge may lie in applying child protection laws.

It is critical to safeguard children against indoctrination, preserve their mental health and protect them against possible attacks on their physical well-being. However, we cannot do this properly if we do not have better tools to observe and prevent excesses on the part of religious sects.

On this subject, I would like to mention certain European initiatives, particularly the work done by France to establish the *Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires*, which is dedicated to monitoring and combating excesses by sects. I believe we should use initiatives like this as our model and focus on sharing expertise so that we can work together to protect our children from the excesses of religious sects.

## **Decent Work for All**

Ms. Turmel made the following intervention in the debate on "Decent work for all"

I worked for a trade union before having the privilege of representing the citizens of Hull–Aylmer in the Canadian House of Commons, so I am of course concerned about the plight of workers. The report covers worrying matters, including social dumping. Even if we do not agree on its definition, we understand what it means. It is unacceptable that economic clout can be used to take advantage of the fact that rights, labour standards and pay are all lower in third-world countries. I am convinced that we all share the belief that freedom, justice, job security and dignity must be at the heart of working conditions for all men and women. The recent deaths of over 1,000 textile workers in Bangladesh reminded businesses, governments and consumers of their responsibilities when it comes to rights at work. The tragic event led to the accord on fire and building safety in Bangladesh, which was signed by trade unions and more than 150 companies from 20 countries and is an example that it is possible to implement initiatives to strengthen workers' rights.

I want to draw the Assembly's attention to two other initiatives that are supported by colleagues in Canada's New Democratic Party. Following the tragedy in Bangladesh, the NDP spokesman for foreign affairs, Paul Dewar, tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling for a parliamentary inquiry into the incident and the adoption of an action plan to prevent similar events. Another member of our

parliament, Ms. Ève Pécelet, who represents La Pointe-de-l'Île, recently presented a draft law that would establish corporate social responsibility and aims to improve the transparency of Canadian mining industries abroad, which will make it easier to monitor our businesses' compliance with labour laws. These initiatives respond to the clearly expressed will of Canadians to see their government adopt measures to put a stop to social dumping. In fact, a 2013 survey showed that 80% of Canadians are willing to take a stance to ensure that what they consume does not hurt workers abroad. I am convinced that that desire transcends frontiers and is shared by the population of Europe. This concern among citizens should not be overlooked. As decision makers, it is our responsibility. We need co-operation and solidarity on this priority issue.

### **Refugees and the Right to Work**

Mr. Casey had the opportunity to intervene in the debate on "Refugees and the right to work," and made the following remarks:

I thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to address the Assembly on the important issue of the right to work for refugees, and to offer some comments from a Canadian perspective.

Policy makers across the world are becoming increasingly aware of the need to remove barriers to the economic and social integration of refugees. Although international law provides for access to work for refugees, due to varying interpretations access to stable, secure jobs differs across countries. Refugees are not unique in this regard, as seasonal unemployment is a chronic problem in some regions of Canada. In support of our international obligations and priorities, Canada partners with international and civil society organisations to admit and resettle refugees from overseas. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees identifies Canada as a key partner in global refugee protection, and each year Canada welcomes thousands of displaced persons seeking a new life in a better country.

Canada, in particular, offers asylum to those with a well-founded fear of persecution, as defined in the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and extends protection to people facing the risk of death, torture, or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. In that respect, Canada has established a system that supports and respects international humanitarian and compassionate efforts. For instance, and in the context of this debate, many asylum seekers in Canada can obtain work permits if the government determines that they cannot support themselves without employment while awaiting a decision on their claims. In other instances, and in some circumstances, asylum seekers may be immediately eligible for social assistance and other government benefits.

Each asylum seeker has the right to a hearing before the arm's-length Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Once their claim has been accepted, refugees in Canada may access a broad range of settlement programmes, including support for language training and labour-market integration. More generally, Canada is working on removing barriers to employment for refugees and other immigrants by streamlining its foreign credential recognition process. This has proved to be a particularly vexing problem.

In terms of outcomes, despite on-going challenges in finding well-paid and stable employment, research suggests that refugees gradually improve their participation in the labour force the longer they stay in Canada. Although refugees initially work less and access social assistance more than other immigrants or Canadian citizens, their employment and wages tend to approach those of other residents only a few years after moving to Canada. Our country continues to explore ways to maximise the social and economic integration of refugees in Canada. By working together, exchanging our experiences in debates such as this, and seeking improvements in our support for refugees' right to work, we can all help displaced persons in their efforts to achieve success and fulfilment in their lives.

### **Ending Child Poverty in Europe**

Senator Downe made the following intervention in the debate on "Ending child poverty in Europe":

You will be pleased to know that I did not travel all the way from Canada to lecture my European colleagues on how to reduce child poverty, but I want to share with you some of the initiatives that we have taken in Canada to deal with poverty.

In 1989, a unanimous motion was passed in Canada's Parliament to eliminate child poverty by 2000. Although we have failed in that effort, Canadians are reminded of that objective by civil society groups each year, and we continue our efforts to reduce child poverty.

Canada has, however, been more successful at reducing its elderly poverty rate, which has fallen by 25% since 1976, and the lessons from that success can be applied to reducing child poverty. The decrease in senior poverty can be largely attributed to the Canada pension plan. Combining universal benefits and income-targeted cash transfers has also been effective in reducing senior poverty in Canada. Elderly poverty rates tend to be highest among women; pension allowances have traditionally been linked to employment history. Canada's old age security benefits and guaranteed income supplement establish an income floor for all, regardless of participation in the work force.

Canada's achievements in reducing its elderly poverty rate provide clear evidence that government taxes and transfers can reduce poverty. To this end, for children, the federal government has provided tax relief for all families, topped up by a refundable credit to assist low-income families in particular. When introduced in 1998, those programmes provided a low-income family with two children with a maximum of €2,000 annually. That amount more than doubled by 2008 and continues to increase. Some commentators see these tax policies as the foundation for a "guaranteed annual income" for children.

The percentage of children who are living in poverty in Canada has declined from a high of 17.4% in 1996 to just over 14% in 2011. There are, however, considerable variations across Canada, from a low of just over 10% in Alberta to more than 22% in some other regions, and across population groups, with a particularly high rate of poverty among Aboriginal children and among children being raised by one parent.

Governments in Canada at all levels and of all political stripes have tried to invest in the best possible start for young children, particularly those from the weakest groups in Canadian society, and in providing income support to their families. Much more needs to be done and we support the report's recommendations. Although we are a long way from eradicating child poverty in Canada, we will continue to pursue its elimination. Thank you for your attention and good luck in reducing child poverty in Europe.

## **MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

On 10 April 2014, three members of the delegation, Mr. Tilson, Senator Rivard and Mr. Casey, travelled to Paris, France to meet with Canada's Permanent Delegation to the OECD, as well as representatives from the OECD responsible for providing analysis of Canadian social and economic policy and the global economy. The purpose of these meetings was to provide delegates with insight into the work of the organization, as the activities of the organization are reviewed and debated annually at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. A summary of these meetings is provided in the sections below.

### **Meeting with Judith Larocque, Canadian Ambassador to the OECD**

Ambassador Larocque and the members of Canada's permanent delegation to the OECD welcomed the parliamentary delegates during the first working session on Canada and the OECD. Canada is one of 19 founding members of the OECD. Its financial support represents 3.7% of the OECD's total budget, making Canada the seventh largest contributor. The three orders of government as well as 30 federal departments and agencies participate in the OECD's work. Some 120 Canadians work in the OECD's secretariat and represent 7% of the organization's management group.

Currently, Canada chairs close to 20 OECD committees and working groups dealing with a wide range of subjects. The role of the Canada's permanent delegation to the OECD is to promote Canada's policies and priorities within the OECD, participate in the OECD's governance (Council, Executive Committee, Budget Committee, External Relations Committee), act as a link between Canadian government departments and the OECD secretariat, support Canadian delegates participating in OECD meetings, and inform Canadian authorities of OECD activities that might be of interest to them.

The OECD's current priorities are as follows: support a return to growth and job creation; contribute to the work of the G20; increase cooperation with non-member countries and particularly with partner countries (China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia); and attract new members. The main challenges facing the OECD are to maintain its relevance through expanded membership and closer relations with emerging countries; ensure its influence with the G8 and G20; identify priorities and allocate resources; and address its internal governance challenges.

Canada derives many benefits from the OECD, such as the opportunity for peer review of our policies on such subjects as the economy, energy and youth employment. Canadian policies and practices are enriched through the experiences of other countries, the sharing of best practices, the development of global rules and standards within a respected and impartial body like the OECD, and the type of dialogue that takes place within the organization.

### **Meeting with the ambassadors from Italy, Poland and Portugal**

Delegates met with the permanent representatives to the OECD from Italy, Poland and Portugal during a working lunch on improving public policy through the OECD.

The Italian ambassador, Mr. Carlo Maria Oliva, stated that the OECD is seen as a pillar of stability and a steady source of consistent advice, which is particularly useful to a country that has seen four governments in four years. Italy's new minister of finance served as the OECD's chief economist for seven years.

The Polish ambassador, Mr. Pawel Wojciechowski, mentioned that his country is one of the OECD's most recent members, having joined in 1996. As a member of the European Union, Poland is still on a learning curve in terms of reform and European standards, and it has not taken full advantage of the opportunities offered by the OECD, although it is closely monitoring OECD standards.

The Portuguese ambassador, Mr. Paulo Vizeu Pinheiro, said that Portugal considers the OECD's work to be very important, particularly during this difficult economic period. The country's economic situation improved from the moment it applied to the European Financial Stability Facility in 2011. Portugal has introduced no less than 415 changes and will soon exit the assistance program. It now has a balance of trade surplus for the first time in several years. It has also integrated its economic goals into its laws.

European economic convergence is generally well supported, although some in Portugal are concerned about the social cost of austerity measures.

Discussions then turned to pension reform and the approaches taken by various countries. One participant stated that gradually increasing the retirement age based on life expectancy makes the most sense economically but is the most difficult to implement politically.

Lastly, participants discussed how the crisis in Ukraine is affecting Europe's economy and trans-European energy distribution, and eroding European solidarity.

### **Meeting with OECD administrators on contributions to the G20**

The delegates met with three senior OECD officials to discuss the organization's contributions to the G20 with regard to tax policy, trade and employment: Mr. Pascal Saint-Amans, Director, Center for Tax Policy and Administration; Mr. Mark Keese, Head of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs; and Mr. Raed Safadi, Deputy Director, Trade and Agriculture.

Mr. Saint-Amans discussed the issues of tax avoidance and tax havens. The rules to combat these problems were originally established through bilateral agreements and are now ineffective against increasingly complicated tax avoidance schemes. The OECD has made this issue a priority and is working with G20 countries to ensure there is strong political will worldwide to introduce the solutions that have been developed. The first solution, which is currently being implemented, is to end banking secrecy. The second is for G20 countries to simultaneously modernize international tax rules. These countries represent 85% of the global economy. The OECD finalized and published the *Action Plan on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting* in July 2013. The plan focuses on correcting current weaknesses in the international tax system and addresses the negative impacts of interaction between national tax systems. Close to 15 measures are to be implemented by 2015 and will lead to the development of a multilateral instrument.

Mr. Keese described how the OECD supports G20 countries in the area of employment and social policies by identifying responses to the employment crisis, policies to minimize the economic effects and strategies to promote a return to employment. The OECD provides significant support to the G20 Task Force on Employment by providing statistics, common definitions, targeted analyses, etc. Some of the challenges in this regard include getting countries to agree on and accept the same terminology, and to identify common challenges to address.

Mr. Safadi first addressed the issue of international trade. Participants at the G20 summit, which took place in Washington in 2008 at the height of the financial crisis, condemned protectionist leanings, made a commitment to keep markets open and asked the OECD to monitor protectionist trends and trade levels. At the Los Cabos summit in 2012, G20 leaders renewed this standstill agreement and extended it from

2013 to 2014. On the subject of agriculture, Mr. Safadi mentioned the efforts of G20 leaders to increase sustainable agricultural production and productivity while closing the gap for small farm operators. The leaders asked the OECD, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization and other agencies to continue to work closely and analyse sustainable measures that governments could take to close the agricultural productivity gap.

### **Meeting with Robert Ford, Deputy Director, Country Studies Division, Economics Department**

Mr. Ford's team is responsible for economic country surveys. An economic survey is published every 18–24 months for each OECD member country and for certain non-member countries such as China, Russia and Brazil. The surveys focus on public policies that have the potential to improve long-term economic performance. They cover a wide range of areas such as labour markets, competition, innovation, human capital, financial markets, sustainable development, social security, taxation, health care and public spending. The hallmark of the surveys is the way in which they clarify the connection between structural policies in these areas and macroeconomic performance.

Mr. Ford gave an overview of the state of the global economy. Europe is doing better, and the European Central Bank has reassured markets by stating that, in a worst-case scenario, it was ready to take strong measures such as debt monetization. This reduced the disparities in interest rates among the various EU countries. Overall growth in Europe will be about 1% this year and 2% next year. The worst has passed but Europe still faces long-term problems, such as a shrinking population. Mr. Ford also focused on the state of the economy in France, Italy, the United Kingdom and China, as well as the impact of the Ukraine crisis on the European economy.

### **PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE HOLY SEE**

On 12 April 2014, the delegation participated in a bilateral mission to the Holy See to discuss key issues in Canada-Holy See relations, including challenges facing religious minorities abroad; migration issues; and the role of the Vatican in promoting interfaith dialogue. To discuss these issues, the delegation met with His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Manberti, Secretary for Relations with States for the Vatican. The delegation's discussion with the Archbishop is summarized below.

### **Meeting with His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Manberti, Secretary for Relations with States, Secretary of State, the Vatican**

Archbishop Manberti began the discussion by explaining that combatting human trafficking is a current foreign policy priority for the Vatican. He noted that the Catholic Church has a particular role to play in this area, as victims of human trafficking are often more likely to turn to priests and nuns for help than agents of the state. He also explained that like Canada, the Holy See, is an observer at the Council of Europe. Its



observer status allows it to present its views on human rights issues, as well as promote cultural and inter-religious dialogue, but remain neutral in elections.

The delegation inquired about the Vatican's views on the challenges facing religious minorities around the world. In discussing the Middle East, the Archbishop explained that challenges in the region had prompted a rise in the emigration of Christian minorities from Lebanon, Iraq and now Syria. However, Archbishop Manberti explained that the solution lies in staying and building peace. He noted that the situation is different in China, where the Catholic Church is not recognized. The discussion then focussed on the Vatican's views of the state of the Catholic Church in Canada and the rise of secularization. Archbishop Manberti said that what mattered was not the number of Catholics in Canada, but that members of the Church are faithful to the gospel in their life. The delegation also asked about the role of women in the Catholic Church and whether women would be allowed to become priests. Archbishop Manberti said that it is important to recognize the contribution of women to the Catholic Church, particularly in their efforts in building schools in Africa, as well as the dignity of every person more generally. Finally, the delegation asked about the impact that the new Pope would have on foreign policy. Archbishop Manberti said that under the new pope, the Vatican will focus on the fight against poverty, environmentalism and human trafficking of persons.

### **Parliamentary Mission to Italy, the Next Country to Hold the Rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

From 13 to 16 April 2014, the delegation participated in meetings related to Italy's upcoming term as President of the Council of the European Union, which begins in July 2014. The purpose of this mission was for parliamentarians to learn about Italy's priorities for its term as EU President, as well as gain insight into the broader political and economic developments within the EU and Italy. During the course of the mission, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with Italian parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of the European Commission, think tanks and other organizations. Background information and summary of these discussions is provided in the sections below.

#### **A. Background Information on the Rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union rotates every six months among EU Member States. The rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union follows a trio formula whereby three EU Member States develop a common 18-month program that sets out the policy agenda for the EU in a broad range of policy areas, except for foreign and security policy. These areas include economic and financial affairs, social policy and health, transport, the environment, agriculture, fisheries, education, justice and home affairs. This program is carried out by each trio member for a six-month period. During the course of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Member State is responsible for chairing the different working groups of the

Council; finding consensus between the different Member States; and formulating proposals for compromises to be made between different Member States. In addition, the Presidency country also plays an important role in negotiating with other EU institutions with legislative authority, such as the European Parliament.

As result of the entry into force of the *Treaty of Lisbon*<sup>14</sup> in December 2009, the Council of the European Union's Council of Foreign Ministers, which is made up of the Foreign Ministers of the EU Member States and is responsible for developing the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, will no longer be chaired by the rotating Presidency country. Instead, the Treaty established a new appointed position, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to chair the Council of Foreign Ministers and represent the EU in international affairs.<sup>15</sup> The High Representative is also the Vice President of the European Commission and participates in the work of the European Council.<sup>16</sup> The current EU High Representative is Catherine Ashton. The overall aim of these changes was to ensure consistency and coherence in the EU's external activities.

Finally, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union is also no longer responsible for chairing the European Council, which is responsible for establishing the EU's overall general political direction and priorities. Under the *Treaty of Lisbon*, a new position of President was created to chair the European Council.<sup>17</sup> The President of the European Council is elected by the Members of the European Council for a renewable term of two and a half years. The current President of the European Council is Mr. Herman van Rompuy, who was first elected in November 2009. In 2012, he was re-elected for a second term starting on 1 June 2012 and running until 30 November 2014.

## **B. Program and Summary of Discussions**

### **Briefing Session with His Excellency Peter McGovern, Ambassador of Canada to Italy**

Ambassador McGovern provided the delegation with an overview of the political and economic situation in Italy. He explained that the election of Italy's new Prime Minister Renzi marked a generational change. As the former Mayor of Florence, he is seen as a "man in a hurry" ready to tackle the key challenges facing Italy's economy, including the

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<sup>14</sup> On 19 October 2007, the 27 EU Member State governments concluded the Treaty of Lisbon, a treaty that amends the two foundational treaties of the European Union, The Treaty Establishing the European Community and the Treaty on the European Union. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced a number of institutional reforms aimed at streamlining the EU decision-making process, enhancing democratic accountability, strengthening EU institutions and giving the EU a stronger presence in international affairs. It came into force in December 2009 after it had been ratified by all 27 EU Member States. European Union, "Lisbon Treaty at a Glance."

<sup>15</sup> General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, "Treaty of Lisbon," Information Note.

<sup>16</sup> The European Commission is the EU's administrative body responsible for policy development and implementation, as well as safeguarding the foundational treaties of the European Union. The European Commission, "About the European Commission."

<sup>17</sup> General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, "Treaty of Lisbon," Information Note.

high unemployment rates among both adults and youth. His commitment to change is reflected in recent appointments to state companies which mark a shift away from the old guard. The Ambassador explained that Italy also faces significant economic pressure from a lack of oil reserves. In addition, the country continues to experience uneven economic development, with most of the wealth in the country remaining concentrated among families living in northern Italy who own small and medium-sized enterprises. The middle of the country, which represents its bureaucratic centre, also is prosperous; however, the southern part of the country remains underdeveloped, and the black market represents 20% of the region's economy. From a foreign policy perspective, Ambassador McGovern explained that Italy could be considered as one of Canada's best partners within the EU due to its transatlantic outlook. However, with regards to recent developments in Ukraine, including Russian involvement in Crimea, the Ambassador explained that Italy has been slow to respond, as Italians historically have been close to Russia. In addition, the country is dependent upon Russian gas and as has strong commercial ties with Russia. In light of these recent events, the delegation also learned that Italy is keen to diversify its energy supplies to include the importation of Canadian liquefied natural gas (LNG).

#### **Meeting with the Honourable Francesca La Marca, Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Italian Parliament**

The delegation had an informal meeting with the Honourable (the Hon.) Francesca La Marca, a Member of the Chamber of Deputies, who represents Italians living abroad from Eastern, Central and North America in the Italian Parliament. The Hon. Francesca La Marca explained that her riding included Canada and she had strong ties to the Canada-Italian community, as she is from Toronto. The delegation heard about her efforts to reorganize the Canada-Italy friendship group and the activities she undertakes to represent her vast riding. She also discussed her participation in various parliamentary committees including the EU Affairs Committee, as well as the Committee on Science, Culture and Instruction.

#### **Working Lunch Co-Hosted by Ambassador McGovern and the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association in Honour of the Honourable Sandro Gozi, Undersecretary for European Union Affairs**

The working lunch began with a discussion of the economic challenges facing Italy. The Hon. Sandro Gozi explained that economic reform in Italy needs to correspond with reform at the EU level. He explained that there are on-going debates at the EU level surrounding austerity policies, as economic growth continues to be low while debt levels remain high. To address the economic challenges facing Italy, Hon. Gozi suggested that the EU needs to be more flexible in its approach, allowing member states to pursue the appropriate policies to meet their unique needs. Absent this approach, the EU could be considered as an obstacle for reform. For these reasons, jobs and economic growth will remain the main priority for Italy's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The

Undersecretary for European Union Affairs then turned to other priorities for the presidency, including industrial policy; climate change and energy policy, the European Union's 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth; and the Digital Agenda. Finally, the Hon. Gozi explained that migration is also a main priority for Italy's Presidency, particularly strengthening the role and budget of Frontex, the EU's border agency, in fighting human trafficking. In addition, the delegation learned that Italy will focus on improving European asylum policy, including ensuring that member states fully implement EU legislation in this area. He further noted that there is insufficient cooperation among EU member states in the distribution of asylum seekers.

The delegation inquired what the Italian government's plans are to help address the high rates of youth unemployment in the country. The Hon. Gozi said that his government is introducing labour market reforms that will promote flexibility and grant youth access to six-month contracts that could be renewed up to three years to help young people gain experience. In addition, the Italian government is making changes to the social protection system to provide support for training for youth, as well as working to ensure that industrial technical schools and universities are providing the knowledge and skills that are linked to labour market needs. The delegation also asked about what the Italian government is doing to promote investment. The Hon. Gozi indicated that the government is undertaking a spending review of the public sector, as well as reducing red tape surrounding public procurement and reducing taxes on labour, businesses and energy. The discussion also focused on experiences of migration in Italy, including different models of the integration of migrants and addressing xenophobia.

### **Meeting with Giampiero Gramaglia, Counsellor, Istituto Affari Internazionali**

The delegation met with Giampiero Gramaglia, from the think tank Istituto Affari Internazionali, to hear his perspective on political and economic developments in Italy and the country's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Mr. Gramaglia gave his views on the political situation in Italy and on the country's new Prime Minister Renzi. He explained that the strength and weakness of every government in Italy depend upon the strength of the Prime Minister and Italians have a tendency to relate to a "strong personality" or a "strong man" such as former Prime Minister Berlusconi. According to Mr. Gramaglia, Mr. Renzi appears to have the confidence of the public, but his strongest opposition will likely come from the Five Star Party of Beppe Grillo, which obtained 25% of the vote in the last elections. Mr. Gramaglia also expected that there would be a big change in the composition of the European Parliament, but that would have little impact on national politics as national parliaments are seen as more important. In terms of the impact of the European Parliamentary elections on Canada, Mr. Gramaglia indicated that the results will likely not influence the ratification of the proposed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU, but the agreement could be influenced by challenges related to the United States trade negotiations with the EU.

The delegation inquired about Mr. Gramaglia's views on the Italian economy, as the delegation had heard varying views on the country's overall wealth. Mr. Gramaglia explained that though Italy has a large public debt, it is a wealthy country. Tax evasion is widespread, but addressing the problem is not a popular measure. The discussion then focussed on foreign policy, including Russia's involvement in Crimea. Mr. Gramaglia indicated that while the EU is quite willing to reprimand Russian actions, it is less willing to pursue sanctions because of its dependence on Russia for oil and gas. He further noted that the EU is not nearly as focused on events in Ukraine as it was when conflict broke out in the Balkans.

### **Briefing by Emmanuel Kamarianakis, Senior Trade Commissioner, Embassy of Canada to Italy**

Mr. Kamarianakis provided the delegation with an in-depth briefing on economic changes in Italy and commercial relations between Canada and Italy in the context of CETA negotiations. He explained that Prime Minister Renzi had just undertaken a wholesale change of the heads of state-owned companies, including the oil and gas, electric and postal companies. He indicated that many of the new CEOs and Presidents of these companies are young women, reflecting a shift away from the traditional ruling class in Italian politics towards a younger more mobile generation. He explained that Italy is an important market for Canada, with the 8<sup>th</sup> largest economy in Europe and a high-end manufacturing sector, which Canada could draw on to bring technology into Canada. He noted that within the auto sector, Fiat/Chrysler are merging supply chains and integrating information technologies into their vehicles to create driverless vehicles. He also said that there are opportunities for enhanced cooperation between Canada and Italy in aerospace and defence. In turning to CETA negotiations, Mr. Kamarianakis explained that the proposed agreement has been well received in Italy, as Italy achieved gains in the area of geographic indicators and government procurement. However, some challenging areas could include current efforts to promote buying Italian food products over products from other countries, as well as the politicization of trade negotiations between the EU and the United States. He further noted that there had not yet been a fulsome political debate on the agreement as the text is not yet available. In response to questions from the delegation regarding which Italian industries are most likely to benefit from the agreement, Mr. Kamarianakis explained that Italy's manufacturing sector is likely to experience rising exports with the implementation of CETA.

### **Meeting with the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL)**

The delegation met with representatives of the International Division of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), a national trade union. The representatives of the CGIL outlined their views of EU efforts to resolve the financial crisis, explaining that workers no longer see European integration as a way to resolve economic challenges but rather as part of the problem. This situation is due to the lack of transparency of

decision making within EU institutions, slow economic growth and high unemployment rates. Representatives explained that this view point is reflected in the rise of anti-EU parties in France, Hungary and Italy. Representatives of CGIL explained that there needs to be a national plan for jobs and increasing public investment to create employment in industrial sectors in Italy. However, they did indicate that they are supportive of some of the Italian government's measures to promote employment and training through apprenticeship programs. The CGIL supports the need for flexibility in labour contracts, but feels that youth need to be offered longer term contracts, rather than six-month contracts which could be extended up for three years. In its view, short-term contracts create a very long probationary period for youth seeking permanent employment. The delegation asked the union representatives about gender equality in the labour market in Italy. The representatives explained that in the political realm there is resistance to guaranteeing gender parity on the list of candidates for political parties, and in Italy female workers continue to experience a pay gap of 17% compared to their male counterparts and tend to work in lower paying jobs.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Ministry of Economic Development**

The delegation was greeted by the Hon. Federica Guidi, the new Minister for Economic Development for Italy, who gave an overview of the priorities of her department. The Hon. Guidi highlighted different ways her department plans to promote international trade through the establishment of networks between different companies; the promotion of trade agreements including CETA; and reform of the manufacturing sector to promote exports from small and medium-sized enterprises. In terms of energy policy, the Minister explained that events in Ukraine demonstrate the need for the diversification of energy sources, and she is looking forward to cooperating more closely with Canada on new investments in this area.

The delegation then had a question and answer session with Amedeo Teti, the Director General for International Trade and Gilberto Dialuce, the Director General for Energy Policy. The delegation inquired about Italy's position on the European Commission's proposed measures for the implementation of the Fuel Quality Directive. In addition, it was interested in learning about the department's perspectives on CETA, including possible barriers to trade, as well as opportunities arising from the agreement. The department officials explained that CETA would help promote trade in energy between Canada and Italy, allowing Italy to diversify its energy sources. The officials also noted that efforts are underway to modify the European Commission's proposal for the implementation of the Fuel Quality Directive and energy policy would be a key focus of upcoming meetings between G7 countries. In terms of other gains from CETA, the officials noted that the agreement would provide protection for geographic indicators for Italian agri-food products and increased market access for services and machinery, as well as addressed challenges related to investment. They further noted that CETA

would serve as a benchmark agreement for trade negotiations between the EU and the United States.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

The delegation met with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Alberto Cutillo, Co-ordinator of the Italian EU Presidency, Andrea Meloni, former Italian Ambassador to Canada and Diego Ungaro, Head of the Canada Desk. Mr. Cutillo began the discussion by providing the delegation with an overview of Italy's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He explained that Italy's Presidency would be one that focuses on managing institutional transitions within the European Union, including a new European Parliament and a new European Commission, including a new High Representative for Foreign Affairs. He noted that these transitions will be occurring at a time where disillusionment with EU institutions is high, which will pose challenges for Italy's term as President. In terms of priorities, Mr. Cutillo explained that the economy will be at the centre of Italy's priorities, focusing in particular on youth unemployment and ensuring that the skills of youth match economic needs. In addition, economic governance of the Eurozone will also be a priority, specifically completing the process of the establishment of a banking union. The Italian Presidency will also focus on the EU's neighbourhood, specifically the Mediterranean area and supporting stabilization in the aftermath of the Arab spring. This work will be conducted through the implementation of specific projects through EU funds that support small and medium-sized enterprises and micro-economies; address environmental and climate change challenges; and support the role of women. He said that he hoped that a resolution to the Ukrainian situation would be found through on-going dialogue with Russia over the status of Crimea.

The discussion then focused on bilateral relations with Canada. The officials highlighted areas of cooperation between Canada and Italy in foreign affairs, particularly in Afghanistan, Libya and Iran. The officials explained that Canada and Italy had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in which Italy would represent Canadian interests in Iran, including offering consular services to Canadians living in the country. In terms of commercial relations, the delegation learned that cooperation between Italy and Canada is strong in the aerospace sector and CETA would serve to strengthen these ties. The officials noted that their department is making efforts to increase awareness of the benefits of CETA among Italian companies. Finally, they noted that they hope Italy and Canada would cooperate more closely in support of the EU's request to become an Observer at the Arctic Council.

The delegation in turn asked questions about Italy's perspective on finding a resolution to the conflict in Syria, and the proposed EU Banking Union. The officials explained that Italy supports working with other neighbouring countries in the region, including Turkey and Lebanon, to find resolutions for issues such as the settlement of refugees from the conflict. With respect to the Banking Union, officials indicated that it is necessary to

support the stability of the Eurozone, as well as the banks within the EU through increased supervision by the European Central Bank.

### **Meeting with Andrea Manciuilli, Deputy Chair, Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs and European Union Affairs**

Mr. Andrea Manciuilli began the discussion by highlighting Italy's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He said that pursuing measures to address the financial crisis will remain a priority, but debates are ongoing surrounding austerity measures which are seen as prolonging the recession. He said that there is a need to create a more friendly business environment by promoting investment, harmonizing industrial policy and promoting trade with Asian and Latin American countries, as well as Canada. He also said that the Mediterranean will be an important theme, focusing specifically on strengthening the EU's border agency Frontex and dealing with the impact of the Arab Spring on the region. He noted that the current problems in Ukraine have also led to some questioning of the EU's ability to act in its own neighbourhood because of internal divisions, but Mr. Manciuilli explained that Italy will do its utmost to support the development of a common EU foreign policy.

The delegation then asked questions about the costs Italy faces in relation to illegal migration from the Mediterranean region. Mr. Manciuilli explained that there is a need for greater solidarity among EU member states in the development of common facilities and procedures to deal with the massive flows of people arriving from North Africa and the Middle East. Members of the delegation were also interested in hearing about which austerity measures implemented by the EU or the Italian government were most unpopular with the public. Mr. Manciuilli explained that the current government is focussing less on absolute loyalty to austerity, but is aiming to reduce the number of public entities and cut spending, which he hoped, will place more money in the hands of households to increase consumer spending. The delegation also asked about the possibility of the EU making greater efforts to support the enlargement of the EU to include members of the Eastern Partnership, such as Moldova, in light of recent events in Ukraine. Mr. Manciuilli explained that the EU has an interest in maintaining a buffer zone between Europe and Russia by strengthening the capacities of the states on its borders. However, he noted that many of the states in the Eastern Partnership are not economically and politically developed enough to meet the criteria for membership without these criteria posing an enormous burden on them.

### **Meeting with Representatives of the European Commission's Delegation to the Republic of Italy**

The delegation met with representatives of the European Commission's Delegation to the Republic of Italy to hear its views on political developments within the EU and its perspective on Italy's upcoming term as Rotating President of the Council of the European Union. Mr. Christian Atzen, Political Officer, explained that during the course



of its Presidency, Italy will have to act as an “honest broker” between the European Parliament and the European Council in determining the new membership of the European Commission. Mr. Atzen explained that it is likely that there will be a stalemate between these institutions in the selection of the new President of the European Commission in the fall of 2014. However, this political stalemate would occur at a time where a strong EU would be needed to deal with challenges on the world stage particularly in finding resolutions to conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. After briefly outlining Italy’s Presidency priorities, Mr. Atzen also noted that there may be some discussion during the course of Italy’s Presidency to undertake further reform of the foundational treaties of the European Union to reflect changes in economic governance that had occurred during the financial crisis. However, he noted that this discussion would open a Pandora’s box and may slow down the EU’s legislative agenda. The discussion then focused on Canada-EU relations and in particular, CETA. Mr. Atzen explained that CETA is the biggest trade agreement negotiated by the European Commission to date and will provide EU companies with access to the US market. It will also serve the EU’s strategic interests of diversifying its energy supplies away from Russia.

However, he noted that the new European Parliament is expected to be more hostile towards European integration, which may pose challenges for the ratification of a trade agreement with Canada and the United States. The delegation asked Mr. Atzen about the different views of EU member states on the proposed trade agreement between the EU and the United States and its implications for Canada. Mr. Atzen noted that both the United Kingdom and Germany are uncertain about a trade agreement with the United States. He also explained that there are a lot of myths surrounding a possible trade agreement with the US, which could alter perceptions in Europe about the benefits of CETA. The delegation also asked about steps the EU is taking to diversify its energy supply. Mr. Atzen explained that there are significant internal and external hurdles in this area, including the need to build a single energy market within the EU through the development of infrastructure. He explained that the EU requires both the political will and the establishment of a long-term vision to achieve its energy security objectives.

The delegation was also interested in hearing the Commission’s views on Italy’s economic situation and the Italian government’s reform program. Mr. Emilio Dalmonte, Vice-Director of the Commission’s Delegation to Italy, explained that there is confidence and optimism surrounding Italy’s economic recovery. The government will face challenges in implementing its reforms because of the legislative process in Italy which requires the passing of numerous additional acts of secondary implementing legislation by Parliament and also faces significant opposition from the bureaucracy.

### **Meeting with Pier Virgilio Dastoli, President of the Italian Council of the European Movement**

The delegation met with Mr. Pier Virgilio Dastoli, President of the Italian Council of the European Movement (CIME), a civil society organization that supports policies that

contribute to the creation of a united federal Europe. Mr. Dastoli outlined to the delegation some of the policies for which his organization is advocating at both the national and the EU level, including moving forward with the banking union; increased investment in infrastructure; promoting dialogue with the horn of Africa on immigration issues; and the need for the EU to have an ambitious defence policy. He explained that though the Mediterranean is a priority for Italy's Presidency, CIME does not see any strong initiatives in this area yet. The delegation asked about the CIME's views on developments at the EU level in the area of climate change, the banking union, and Ukraine. Mr. Dastoli explained that the EU is still developing some of its positions in the area of climate change, including the role of renewable energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With respect to the banking union, Mr. Dastoli indicated that there is insufficient capital available to backstop banks in the case of another crisis. In addition, the banking union does not include local banks, which means the deposits of individuals are not guaranteed. In terms of Ukraine, he explained that the EU's response to conflict in the country reflects a realpolitik approach that takes into account the EU's relationship with Russia and the lack of clarity surrounding the democratic dimension of the Euromaidan movement in Ukraine.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. David Tilson, M.P.  
President  
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	2nd Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of the PACE and Mission to the OECD and to the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Strasbourg and Paris, France Vatican and Rome, Italy
<b>DATESSSS</b>	April 7 – 16, 2014
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Percy Downe, Senator Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. David Tilson, M.P. Mr. Sean Casey, M.P. Mr. Corneliu Chisu, M.P. Ms. Nicole Turmel, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Maxime Ricard, Association Secretary Ms. Karin Phillips, Advisor
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$12,005.42</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$24,770.15</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$5,326.17</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$9,983.15</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$1,015.32</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$3.77</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$53,103.98</b>