

Canada - Europe  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
Canada - Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the Second Part of the 2010  
Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the  
Council of Europe**

**Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association**

**Strasbourg, France  
April 26 to 30, 2010**

# Report

Mr. David Tilson, M.P., Mr. Scott Simms, M.P., and Mrs Francine Lalonde, M.P., travelled to Strasbourg to participate in the second part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in which Canada enjoys observer status, along with Israel and Mexico. They were accompanied by association secretary Philippe Méla and advisor Sebastian Spano, and were joined in Strasbourg by His Excellency, Mr. Louis de Lorimier, Canada's ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg and Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, and his deputy, Mrs. Sirine Hijal.

## Overview

The spring session featured a full order of business<sup>1</sup> with a wide range of topics being debated in committees, political groups, and in the Assembly. The assembly held debates on the following topics:

- Lobbying in a democratic society (European code of conduct on lobbying);
- Associating women in the prevention and the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe;
- Joint debate on the consequences of the economic crisis:
  - The social impact of the economic crisis
  - The impact of the global economic crisis on migration in Europe
  - Women and the economic and financial crisis
  - Investing in family cohesion as a development factor in times of crisis
- Wealth, welfare and wellbeing: how to reconcile them in a changing Europe;
- Current affairs debate: the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia;
  
- Joint debate:
  - Piracy – a crime and a challenge for democracies
  - The necessity to take additional international legal steps to deal with sea piracy;
- Commemorating the victims of the great famine (Holodomor) in the former USSR;

<sup>1</sup>

The order of business is available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/default.asp>

- Honouring of obligations and commitments by Montenegro;
- Urgent debate: the urgent need for a constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Urgent debate: the situation in Belarus – recent developments;
- Effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Protection of “whistle-blowers;”
- Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria;
- Migrants and refugees: a continuing challenge for the Council of Europe;
- Biodiversity and climate change; and
- The Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy

The Assembly also heard from the following guest speakers:

- Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers;
- Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine;
- Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, former head of the international fact-finding mission on the conflict in Georgia;
- Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation;
- Mrs. Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police of Switzerland;

## **Canadian Activities during the Session**

### **1. Overview**

The members of the delegation actively participated in debates in the Assembly and in a number of committee meetings, in particular, the Political Affairs Committee, the Economic Affairs and Development Committee, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, and the Committee on Refugees, Migration and Population. The Canadian delegates also attended meetings of the various political groups in the PACE.

A number of special meetings were also organized in order to help the delegates broaden their appreciation of the work of the PACE, including meetings with the Treaty Office of the Council of Europe, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the PACE.

## **2. Briefing by Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe**

The delegation was briefed by Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, His Excellency, Mr. Louis de Lorimier, on recent developments at the Council of Europe and Canada's participation. His Excellency also briefed the delegation on the political situation in Belgium, developments in European Union-Canada relations. Finally, there was a discussion on Canada's Permanent Observer mission to the Council of Europe and the assistance it provides to the Canadian delegations to PACE.

### **a. Political Situation in Belgium**

His Excellency provided an update on what may be described as a constitutional crisis in Belgium arising out of competing interpretations of what the electoral laws of Belgium require in the electoral district that encompasses Brussels (Brussels-Hale-Vilvoorde, or BHV). In the BHV district, the only bi-lingual district in Belgium, French residents are entitled to vote for francophone political parties. In 2003, Belgium's Constitutional Court ruled that the BHV district would have to be reapportioned, or its boundaries redrawn. The parties that make up the coalition government have been unable to agree on how to redraw the boundaries and on the critical question of French-language rights, particularly whether French-speaking residents would continue to enjoy the voting rights they currently enjoy. As a result of the impasse on how to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court, the current government resigned. The resignation comes at a particularly inopportune moment, given that Belgium is set to assume on July 1<sup>st</sup> the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, raising questions about its capacity to fulfill that role.

### **b. Canada-Belgium Relations**

Ambassador de Lorimier noted that Canada and Belgium have strong trade relations, amounting to about \$3 billion in bi-lateral trade, largely on trade in investments.

### **c. Canada-EU Relations**

The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement negotiations are proceeding well. Ambassador de Lorimier noted that the EU is keen on a trade agreement with Canada as this would help the EU to indirectly access the US market. Since the failure of the Doha multi-lateral trade negotiations, the EU is very interested in strengthening bi-lateral trade relationships. He commented that non-tariff barriers to trade, including so-called "supply management" policies and government procurement rules, especially at the municipal and provincial levels, are of particular concern to the Europeans. He cited the case of a large contract awarded by the City of Montreal, without a request for proposals, to Bombardier for the construction of subway cars. This attracted a complaint and legal action from Alstom, a French maker of railway vehicles. [Ultimately, a Bombardier-Alstom consortium was awarded the contract.] Ambassador de Lorimier generally sees signs of progress in reducing barriers to trade, noting that tariff and non-tariff barriers were coming down in many areas.

#### **d. Canada`s Permanent Observer Mission to the Council of Europe**

Canadian delegates raised the issue of how to maximize the role of the Permanent Observer mission to the Council of Europe. The delegation suggested that briefings from the Ambassador on Monday mornings or afternoons before the start of the part-sessions would be immensely helpful, as would more regular monitoring of the Committee of Ministers and more communication between sessions. The Ambassador indicated that significant budget cuts prevent his office from providing additional services for the Canadian PACE delegation, although he suggested that his deputy and the executive secretary to the delegation could discuss ways in which his office might be of more assistance between part-sessions. As for the Committee of Ministers, neither he nor his staff attends many meetings, apart from the annual meeting. He noted that his budget allocation for the Council of Europe has decreased 50%, while his overall budget was reduced by 3.5%.

### **3. Meeting with the Mexican Observer Delegation**

A meeting was also held with the Mexican observer delegation where the members discussed collaboration on issues of common interest at PACE. The Mexican delegation raised a number of issues on which they sought input from the Canadian delegation. These are detailed below:

#### **a. Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Tobacco Act**

Concerns were expressed by the Mexican delegation about the enactment of Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Tobacco Act. This bill received Royal Assent on 8 October 2009 (it came into force on 18 May 2010). The bill prohibits the use of certain additives to tobacco products, such as colourings or flavours, that make tobacco products more attractive to young people. The bill addresses concerns about tobacco products containing additives that are seen as inducing young people to smoke. The Mexican delegation was conveying concerns expressed in some of Mexico`s tobacco-growing regions of the impact of the bill on Mexico`s tobacco exports to Canada. The Mexican delegation sought advice from the Canadian delegation on how best to raise the issue and through which government channels. It was suggested that the likely recourse would be at the ministerial level, perhaps through Mexico`s embassy in Canada. It was pointed out however, that the bill has received Royal Assent and would come into force in May 2010.

#### **b. Canadian Companies Operating in Mexico and their Environmental Practices**

The Mexican delegates conveyed to the Canadian delegation reports that Canadian mining companies operating in Mexico may not be respecting Canadian environmental standards. A question was raised as to the extent to which these companies may be subject to Canadian environmental standards, which are generally considered to be

more stringent than Mexican standards. Members of the Canadian delegation expressed their appreciation of the importance of the issue to Mexico. It was noted that the general rule is that Canada cannot legislate in respect of activities, whether economic or social, that take place on the territories of other nations, or impose Canadian law in respect of the activities of Canadians abroad. Canada can impose environmental

standards on companies operating on Canadian soil. Yet, to purport to apply Canadian law in a foreign jurisdiction would pose considerable challenges and run counter to international law principles. The laws of those countries would apply to Canadian companies, including laws relating to environmental standards. The Canadian delegation encouraged the Mexican delegates to raise these issues through other inter-parliamentary fora where the member countries have common interests in the issues, or at a diplomatic level.

### **c. Canadian Visas for Mexicans**

In response to the concerns raised by the Mexican delegation about the continuing requirement that Mexican visitors to Canada require a visa, the Canadian delegation reported that the Canadian government is making every effort to speed up the visa application process in Mexican cities.

### **d. COP 16 Climate Change Conference**

The Mexican delegation reminded Canadian delegates that Mexico will host the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP16) in November 2010. Canada was encouraged to send a parliamentary delegation.

### **e. World Parliamentary Forum on Youth**

From August 25 to 27, Mexico will host the World Parliamentary Forum on Youth in Guanajuato, Mexico. The forum is being organized by the Legislature of the Mexican Congress through the Committee on Youth and Sport. The Mexican delegates strongly encouraged Canadian parliamentarians to participate in the event. Materials prepared for the event, describe it as the first world forum of its kind, designed to involve members of governments, parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations.

#### **4. Meeting with the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe**

Members of the Canadian delegation took advantage of the opportunity to meet with a representative from the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. Mrs. Isil Gachet, Director of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights gave the delegation an overview of the work of the Office of the Commissioner, its mandate and some of the recent activities of the Office.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Gachet began by explaining that the Commissioner does not investigate individual cases of abuse of human rights or breaches of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Convention). Individuals who have been subject to practices or legislation that are contrary to the Convention have a recourse by initiating a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, after the individual has exhausted all legal remedies within the country alleged to have committed the violation of the individual's human rights.

The Commissioner can, however, investigate and monitor the practices and legislation of individual members of the Council of Europe to ensure they are consistent with the requirements of the Convention. The Commissioner may do so on his own initiative. In monitoring the human rights practices of individual member countries, the Commissioner will typically make short visits to the country being monitored, followed by a report focussing on particular issues of concern as identified in the country visit. These reports can include findings on the conditions in the subject-country and recommendations to ameliorate or remedy any failures by the country to adhere to the human rights norms of the Council of Europe. The Commissioner also engages in ongoing dialogue with member countries where there may appear to be concerns about a member country's human rights practices.

The Commissioner has developed a "rapid response" mechanism to deal with crisis situations in member countries as well as the aftermath of these crises. Mrs. Gachet noted that one of the most serious recent crises which the Commissioner has had to address was the humanitarian consequences of the recent armed conflict between Georgia and Russia.

Mrs. Gachet emphasized that the Commissioner is careful not to duplicate the efforts of other governmental and international organizations who have a mandate to deal with issues that have a bearing on human rights that may arise in member countries.

With the recent implementation of Protocol 14 to the Convention, the Commissioner now has the mandate to intervene on his own initiative in individual cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights either by submitting written comments or taking part in hearings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Commissioner's mandate derives from Resolution 99 (50) on the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights:  
<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=458513&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>.

<sup>3</sup> See Article 13 of Protocol No. 14 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, amending the control system of the Convention. A copy of Protocol 14 is available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/194.htm>.

## **5. Meeting with the Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

The Canadian delegation met with Mr. Mateo Sorinas, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Mr. Sorinas is responsible generally for the day-to-day functioning of the Assembly, follows-up on its decisions, and coordinates the work of its committees. The delegation raised a number of issues concerning the rules of procedure that have prevented the Canadian delegation from making the most of its participation rights in the Assembly. In particular, the Chair of the Canadian delegation noted that Rule 59.2 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Assembly* requires observer delegations to submit the names of its six delegates and six alternates appointed for the whole duration of the Session prior to the start of the first part-session of the Assembly. The Chair of the delegation explained that under the constitution of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, delegates to the PACE must be drawn from the membership of the political parties in both the House of Commons and the Senate, and weighted according to the parties' representation in both chambers. This creates a limited pool of candidates for some parties, such as the Bloc Quebecois. Should the current Bloc delegate not be able to participate in a PACE part-session, the Bloc would not be able to name an alternate. More importantly, this situation creates a problem identifying enough delegates to send to the PACE part-sessions, undermining the delegation's capacity to participate fully in the PACE.

While Mr. Sorinas sympathised with the dilemma facing the Canadian delegation, he stressed that the Rules of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe with respect to all delegations were designed to ensure continuity. Other countries face similar problems. He noted Spain in particular, with its membership being drawn from smaller parties representing the Basque region and Catalonia. He explained that open-ended membership in the past created problems in the quality of participation by delegations. Irregular participants, even when they are on the list of delegates, also create problems with the work of committees, often requiring a recap of the issues being debated in these meetings, sometimes disrupting the smooth flow of committee work.

The Canadian delegation also raised the issue of the debating order in the Assembly. Too often, Canadian delegates are not able to speak on important debates because they are too far down the list of speakers. Even when a Canadian delegate is in a favourable position on the order of speakers, for reasons that are not apparent, he or she may be moved down the list.

Mr. Sorinas suggested that both issues need to be formally raised, in writing, with the President of PACE. The President would, in turn, refer the issues to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs of the PACE. Mr. Sorinas also indicated that he would raise the issue of the order of speaking directly with the President and try to have the issue addressed at the Bureau of the Assembly.



## **6. Presentation by the Council of Europe`s Treaty Office**

Representatives from the Council of Europe's Treaty Office organized a presentation for the benefit of the delegation on the treaty process at the Council of Europe, including Canada's participation. The officials explained the various steps in the development and coming into force of a treaty from identifying a need for a treaty, to the process of elaboration and ultimately to signing, ratification and implementation. The presentation was extremely helpful and informative and enabled the delegates to gain an in-depth understanding of the roles played by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the development of treaties. The officials also outlined Canada's contributions to the development of a number of specific treaties.

The officials began by noting that approximately 40% of all Council of Europe treaties or conventions originate from initiatives of the PACE. It is the Committee of Ministers, however, that determines whether to commence the process of drafting a treaty. Once a decision is taken to commence the process, a conference of "specialized" ministers, with expertise in the particular subject-matter, is convened. When a draft treaty is completed, an opinion from the PACE is required. Ultimately, adoption of a convention or treaty requires a two-thirds majority of the Committee of Ministers.

Observer countries are entitled to participate in the drafting process. Such participation entitles the observer country to sign and ratify a treaty as of right. Canada has participated in the drafting of 17 treaties. With respect to other treaties, Canada may become a signatory by acceding to these treaties. The process of accession requires an application to the Committee of Ministers through the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Canada is a signatory to seven Council of Europe treaties, including the Convention on Cybercrime (signed but not ratified) and the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (signed and ratified).

## **7. Visit to Struthof Concentration Camp**

The Canadian delegation was greatly moved by a visit to the Struthof Concentration Camp situated about 50 km south-west of Strasbourg. The visit served as a reminder of the important need to remain vigilant about protecting human rights and of the critical role played by the Council of Europe in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

## **8. Canadian Intervention in Assembly Debates**

- **Lobbying in a Democratic Society (European Code of Conduct on Lobbying)**

Mr. David Tilson, M.P. had prepared a speech on this topic, but due to the lengthy list of speakers, he did not have an opportunity to deliver his speech. The speech, however, was submitted to the Table Office to be part of the Official Record of the Sitting:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The verbatim record of Mr. Tilson`s speech is available at:  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2010/E/1004261500ADD1E.htm>.

"I am pleased to be able to speak today on behalf of the Canadian delegation and offer my comments on the draft recommendation for a Europe-wide code of conduct for lobbying.

The creation of a European code of conduct on lobbying is a critical element in fostering public confidence in the institutions of government, and thereby strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

The importance of a code of conduct that all the member states of the Council of Europe would adhere to cannot be overestimated. As the report of the rapporteur rightly notes, citizens have a democratic right to know who has access to government decision makers for the purpose of attempting to influence decision makers. Over and above creating transparency, a code of conduct goes a considerable way towards ensuring that lobbyists do not use improper means to influence decision makers by placing them in a conflict of interest to obtain favourable government treatment.

The report mentions Canada as an example from which the Council of Europe can draw inspiration in drafting a code of conduct. Canada has had a lobbyists' registration system since 1989. A lobbyists' code of conduct has been in place since 1997. Since 2008, the code of conduct has been codified in lobbying legislation. As a result, the activities of lobbyists have been subject to much greater regulation with the enactment of the Lobbying Act and the creation of the independent office of the Commissioner of Lobbying who reports directly to and is accountable to Parliament. These reforms were part of a much bigger package of reforms that came into effect in 2007 and 2008 with Federal Accountability Act.

Among the features of the new lobbying legislation are: an expanded definition of public office holder to include designated public office holders which includes: ministers, ministerial staff, deputy ministers, chief executives of departments and agencies, other senior departmental officials, top military personnel and certain appointments made by cabinet; a new requirement that all contacts with public office holders by lobbyists be reported in monthly reports to the commissioner; a requirement to disclose to the lobbying commissioner a disclosure within 10 days of entering into a undertaking on behalf of a client to lobby a government official; a five-year post-employment ban on lobbying imposed on designated public office holders and members of a prime ministerial transition team; a ban on contingency, or success, fees by lobbyists; a fully independent Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying reporting directly to Parliament with increased investigative powers; and a ban on political activities by lobbyists where such activities may place a public office holder in a real or apparent conflict of interest.

I congratulate the rapporteur, Mr. Mendes-Bota on his report, but I wish to advise that there have been some major changes to Canadian legislation concerning lobbying. I have drawn these changes to the attention of the rapporteur. As I noted, the memorandum to the report does not incorporate the major reforms I have just described which have moved Canada's lobbying regime from a registration system to one that regulates the activities of lobbyists and imposes a

code of conduct on lobbying. I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that some means be found at some point to correct the text of the report so that it reflects the actual situation with respect to lobbying in Canada.

In closing, I commend the Parliamentary Assembly for taking this important first step towards the creation of a lobbyists code of conduct to apply to all member states of the Council of Europe, a step that will serve to strengthen democratic institutions by ensuring transparency in government and restore public confidence in the democratic process. The Canadian delegation supports the recommendation of the committee.”

- **The Social Impact of the Economic Crisis**

Mr. Scott Simms, MP delivered a speech on the “Social Impact of the Economic Crisis.”<sup>5</sup>

“Thank you, sir. I thank the entire Council of Europe for allowing me these few moments to speak. As observers, we tend to be at the end of the list, but none the less I am very grateful.

This is an important debate and I congratulate the rapporteurs on their reports. I will focus on the report entitled, “The social impact of the economic crisis”. The report is very well prepared. It touches on the major themes that cross all regions, including the continent of North America. Many times when I address this Assembly, I say that I have come across the ocean but, this month, I have to say that I come from the other side of the volcano.

Coming here, I saw this report and I realised how common these themes and the problems that we face are. The economic crisis has shaken up the entire system in more ways than we can imagine. The catalyst was south of our border. In many ways, we sleep next to a giant - the United States of America. Over 80% of our export trade is with that one trading partner, which means a great degree of dependency. We have certainly felt the sting of the crisis. One of the reasons we were able to come through it as easily as we did is that we established a great banking system back in the late 1990s and the early part of this century.

However, I should like to address an issue that has been a cause for concern in Canada and the whole of North America – the security of our seniors’ pensions. Public and private pensions took a major hit in all of North America, but in Canada especially. In some cases, pensions devalued by more than 50% in a year. For the most part, our pensions work through what we call direct benefits, so they are paid out until the end of life. Pensions devalued by half, so many people have been thrust into poverty who were not in poverty before.

We now have a crisis under way, and everything that happened was created by speculative measures. We throw so many of our social programmes at the will of speculators that it is becoming alarming. Because there is a dangerous situation with pensions, we end up with so-called crowding of other social programmes in

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<sup>5</sup> The verbatim record of Mr. Simms’s speech is available at:  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2010/E/1004271500E.htm>.

our country that need desperate attention. Child care is going to be the new frontier for social policy in Canada because it is in such high demand among young people: so many more women are in the work force, as well as men, that child care has become essential. Such an economic crisis in the pensions sector and other social sectors, including health care, means that what needs urgent attention is now being crowded out. As one of my colleagues pointed out earlier, we have to be prepared for when this volcano erupts again. International standards – yes. Standards for how we conduct business – absolutely. That is why I commend this report, with its emphasis on health care and labour standards. Workers' compensation, employment insurance: these are the methods that we must hold dear.

Finally, I would like to quote from paragraph 58 of the report that I like the most: "We all allowed the value of goods to overcome the value of values and the replacement of solidarity by greediness." Let us build a better world first and foremost through our social programmes. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak."

- **Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

Mrs. Francine Lalonde, MP, spoke on the topic of "Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity." A summary of her speech is provided here:<sup>6</sup>

THE PRESIDENT – Thank you. I call Mrs Lalonde.

Mrs LALONDE (*Observer from Canada*) said that when she saw Mr. Gross's report in its original version, she admired it and admired it still. The thrust of the sentiment it had made was clear and the report was intended to apply all over Europe. In Quebec, where she was from, and in Canada generally, there had been legal processes in relation to same-sex marriages since 1977. In Quebec, you could not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. Even where there was a legal basis for thwarting discrimination it could be difficult for homosexuals, who had to live a lie and not to fulfil their potential. Men, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders should all be able to live their lives to their full potential. The work done by the Council of Europe was admirable, but it needed to reach out to parents who wondered about the sexuality of their children and who did not think that they had a future. Young people faced with that plight turned to despair, which often led to violence. They could feel rejected and destroyed and think that their only option was suicide. Legal remedies made it easier for these young people to express themselves. She thanked the President and Mr. Gross for his report.

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<sup>6</sup> The practice at the PACE is that a verbatim record of speeches is available for speeches delivered in English. Summaries only are provided for speeches in other languages: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2010/E/1004291500E.htm>

## II

### **Background: The Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation which aims:

- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity;
- to 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
- to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe has now reached a membership of 47 countries from the Azores to Azerbaijan, and from Iceland to Cyprus, with Montenegro joining as its newest member in May 2007. 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>7</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.

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. The parliaments of Canada, Israel and Mexico currently hold observer status with PACE. The special guest status of Belarus, which had applied for membership in the Council of Europe in 1993, was suspended in January 1997 in the wake of the adoption of a new constitution in Belarus, which was widely seen as undemocratic.

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. It is consulted on all new international treaties drafted by the Council, holds the Council and member governments accountable, engages in studies of a range of issues of common interest to Europeans and provides a common forum for debate for national

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<sup>7</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>.

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. 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 (EBRD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). 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. 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).<sup>8</sup>

Respectfully submitted,

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

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<sup>8</sup> Canadian officials from several federal government departments and agencies and from one provincial government participate in more than 20 meetings annually of committees, expert groups, and steering committees of the Council of Europe. Canadian parliamentarians attend all four parts of the annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as parliamentary committee meetings at the EBRD in London and the OECD in Paris.

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Second part of the 2010 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Brussels, Belgium
<b>DATES</b>	April 26 to 30, 2010
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mrs. Francine Lalonde, M.P. Mr. Scott Simms, M.P. Mr. David Tilson, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Philippe Méla, Association secretary Mr. Sebastian Spano, Advisor
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$21,282.25</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$ 6,074.13</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$ 247.50</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 2,744.00</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,347.88</b>