

Canada - Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada - Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation
at the Third Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Strasbourg, France
June 23-27, 2014**

Report

Mr. Corneliu Chisu, MP, Head of Delegation; Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator; and Mr. Sean Casey, MP, travelled to Strasbourg to participate in the third part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE or Assembly), in which Canada enjoys observer status, along with Israel and Mexico. They were accompanied by Association Secretaries, Mr. Maxime Ricard (outgoing) and Mrs. Guyanne Desforges (incoming). The delegation was joined in Strasbourg by Mr. Alain Hausser, First Secretary in the Canadian mission to the European Union and Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe.

A. Background: The Council of Europe

1. Mandate and Function of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation whose aims are:

- 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.¹

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

¹ For a complete list of the Council of Europe's treaties, see: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeTraites.asp?CM=8&CL=ENG>.

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 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 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 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.

2. Canada's Role at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of 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).

Canadian parliamentarians play an important role in the various political and intergovernmental institutions of Europe. Involvement by Canadian parliamentarians parallels Canada's diplomatic and ministerial efforts in Europe to promote Canadian interests there. Of particular importance are the parliamentary contacts at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the opportunities for Canadian parliamentarians to participate in debates in the plenary Assembly and in the Committees of PACE.

Canadian parliamentary delegates have the opportunity to speak directly with parliamentary counterparts from member states of the Council of Europe. Each of the 28 member states of the European Union are also members of the Council of Europe. This is a valuable entry point for Canada to raise issues of common interest, defend national interests, explain misunderstandings, and address specific irritants in relations between Canada and specific member states. This is particularly important in the next stage of the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) which will require ratification by all member states of the EU and approval of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Participation in PACE will continue to

provide unique opportunities to promote the agreement to ensure its ratification and address any potential concerns by EU member states that are also member states of the Council of Europe. Canadian parliamentarians will continue to play a valuable role in this endeavour.

Although Canada is not entitled to vote on resolutions of the Assembly or draft resolutions in the committees (except with respect to matters relating to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, of which Canada is a member), Canadian parliamentarians are entitled to speak to these matters. This provides a valuable opportunity to ensure Canadian interests in a particular matter are communicated in an important international forum. It also ensures that Canadian perspectives are considered in the Council of Europe's development of broad positions on international matters.

B. Overview of the Agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

A wide range of topics were debated in the Assembly, and in its committees and political groups. The Assembly held debates on the following:

- Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee
- Observation of the presidential election and of the early parliamentary elections in the FYROM
- Observation of the early presidential election in Ukraine
- Free Debate
- Joint Debate:
 - The “left-to-die boat”: actions and reactions
 - The large-scale arrival of mixed migratory flows on Italian shores
 - Violence in and through the media
- Evaluation of the implementation of the reform of the Parliamentary Assembly
- Towards a better European democracy: facing the challenges of a federal Europe
- Parliamentary contribution to solving the Western Sahara conflict
- Joint Debate:
 - Identities and diversity within intercultural societies
 - Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy
- Current affairs debate: Political and humanitarian consequences of the crisis in Ukraine
- Challenges for the Council of Europe Development Bank
- Europe's public administrations in flux: public service under threat
- Reinforcement of the independence of the European Court of Human Rights
- Child-friendly juvenile justice: from rhetoric to reality

The Assembly also heard from the following speakers:

- Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers
- Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan
- Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

C. Canadian Activities during the Session

1. Overview

The members of the delegation actively participated in proceedings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe including plenary proceedings and committee meetings. In addition, the members attended meetings of the various political groups in the Assembly.

The delegation was also briefed by Mr. Alain Hausser, Canada's Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe. In addition, a number of special meetings were held with representatives from three member states of the European Union and the Council of Europe, to discuss issues arising from Canada's relationship with the European Union: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia and Serbia.

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

Mr. Alain Hausser provided the delegates with an update on the developments in the European Union and at the Council of Europe of interest to Canada and the work of the Canadian mission to the European Union in furthering those interests. Mr. Hausser briefed the delegation on the several specific issues such as the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, visas, the European Union's Fuel Quality Directive, safe energy supplies for Europe, recent European Parliament elections, and the Permanent Representative's Work with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

3. Meeting with the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the PACE

A bilateral meeting was arranged with the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the PACE. There were broad ranging discussions among delegation members on numerous topics, including: the political situation and questions of national unity in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the economic situation and the level of unemployment both in Europe and in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the differences between the old and the new generations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the role of the Peace Implementation Council, an international body charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4. Meeting with the Delegation of Serbia to the PACE

A meeting was held with several of the Serbian delegates to the PACE to discuss among other things, their economic situation after the water disaster; the visa and the social/youth mobility agreement.

The Canadian Head of the delegation, who previously had the opportunity to meet the Ambassador of Serbia to Canada, addressed several current concerns. Discussion on the main priorities of the newly elected government (March 2014) took place, including security, corruption, unemployment and violence against women. Parliamentarians followed-up on the economic and trading relationship between the two countries which have increased over the past few years.

The delegates concluded with confirming that the cooperation between the two countries is quite important to pursue. The Serbian delegation thanked Canada, once again, for the financial assistance received in the last few months after their major flood. Serbia is continuing their work to seek more assistance with EU.

5. Meeting with the Delegation of Latvia to the PACE

A bilateral meeting was arranged with the Latvian delegation. This meeting was seen as providing an important opportunity for Canadian parliamentarians to raise concerns or matters of interest to Canada with the country that will assume the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU).

A Canadian delegation is planning a parliamentary mission to Riga in the Fall of 2014 which will be after the Latvia general elections. Topics such as the Canada-EU relations; the perspectives of different EU institutions on Latvia's priorities for its term as rotation President of the Council of the European Union and Canada-Latvia relations were discussed.

Delegates also discussed the political and economic development with Latvia, including CETA and trade. Canada exports were recently increased due to the sale of Bombardier aircraft to Air Baltic.

The current political and security situation in Eastern Europe was also raised, as well as the social policy developments within the EU, labor, human rights and education challenges for Latvia.

The Head of the Latvian delegation was pleased that Canada is considering a visit and welcomed parliamentarians to Riga, the culture capital of EU. Such visit will follow the exchanges that took place with Foreign Minister Baird in April 2014 and the visit of the Canada-Baltic-Nordic Parliamentary Friendship Group the previous year.

D. Canadian Intervention in Assembly Debates

Canadian delegates were active participants in Assembly debates during the part-session, making 7 interventions in debates on a range of a broad range of topics. All delegates presented at least one speech.

Monday, 23 June 2014

Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Initiatives in International Development

Mr. Corneliu Chisu - I am always grateful to have an opportunity to contribute to the excellent work of the Assembly.

I would like to talk about the commitment that many countries have made to improve the health of mothers and children in the world's poorest countries. Members will recall that the G8 countries made that an international development priority at the Toronto summit in

2010, when Canada used its G8 presidency to draw attention to the issue and obtain commitments from member countries to address the problem. The result was the so-called Muskoka initiative, and the commitments arising from it are built upon the millennium development goals.

As the Assembly discussed in January in its consideration of a report on the MDGs, although much has been accomplished in meeting some of the goals, maternal and child health remains an area that has not seen the same level of progress. Every year, 16 million adolescent girls of 15 to 19 years of age and a further 2 million under the age of 15 give birth. Disturbingly, maternal mortality is the leading cause of death among adults and girls in many countries. Only 55% of pregnant women in developing countries receive the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits, and in some countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than 50% of women have skilled attendance during childbirth. Some 222 million women would like to prevent pregnancy but do not use effective methods of contraception, which is a leading cause of the approximately 80 million unintended pregnancies, 30 million unplanned births and 20 million unsafe abortions a year. Tragically, 800 women and adolescent girls die every day from preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth, which represents an annual total of 287,000 deaths.

It now appears unlikely that MDGs 4 and 5 – to reduce child mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters – will be met by 2015. In the face of the sobering statistics, we need to renew our commitments made in the MDGs. The Muskoka initiative succeeded in raising \$7.3 billion in new funding for maternal and child health, and in my own country we have committed to providing \$1.1 billion in new funding, making a total of \$2.85 billion over five years.

Money alone, however, will not improve the situation of women and children who lack basic care. The international community needs to step up its efforts under the MDG framework. Our countries need to take leadership roles in promoting governance reforms, including by fighting corruption. It is at that level that we can foster conditions that promote women's health, including gender equality, the eradication of violence against women and children, the creation of job opportunities and the promotion of favourable working conditions. Above all, as the Assembly resolved in January 2014, we need to work on reducing global inequality, which, sadly, is the root cause of many problems in developing countries.

Tuesday, 24 June 2014

Violence in and through the media

Senator Michel Rivard - It is a pleasure to speak again in this Assembly. I congratulate the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on the report and especially the rapporteur on the quality of his work.

The theme brings together both the mandate and the raison d'être of the Council of Europe, particularly in respect of its work on cybercrime and violence against children. The problem, which is also being tackled by parliamentarians in all countries, affects the most vulnerable in our society such as children and women victims of violence. The situation is such that it is more and more urgent for us to complete our work through an effort that reaches beyond boundaries and frontiers.

We can see examples of the joint work that is necessary to tackle the problem in the recent work of the Parliament of Canada. In December 2012, a standing committee of our senate published a report following a study of online bullying by the young. For instance, the committee recommended that the federal government should work with provincial and territorial governments to contribute to the development of a co-ordinated strategy for combating online bullying. It also recommended that such a strategy should be implemented in compliance with Canada's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In April 2013, a standing committee of Canada's House of Commons considered the issue of social media and the protection of private life. The committee noted in its report that social media can serve to incite violence against certain vulnerable groups, such as women who are victims of domestic violence and the handicapped.

Other examples could also be given in terms of laws passed. A few days ago, our parliament was considering draft law C-13, the law on protecting Canadians against cybercrime, which makes it a crime to distribute intimate pictures without the subject's consent. It also modifies the tools available to the police when they follow up on online crime, including online bullying. Parliament legislated in 2011 to force Internet service providers to declare any child pornography that they revealed. Our criminal code was also changed in 2012 to add new crimes to protect children. It is now, for instance, a crime to make sexually explicit material available to children.

Certain measures can be taken at the national level to combat the problem of violence in and through the media. However, it is important to stress that the very nature of the media is such that they do not recognise frontiers. Consequently, the violence that happens in and through the media requires an international co-ordinated initiative. The choice of vehicle for how to challenge this initiative is not in any way self-evident. It is a huge challenge for the international community. The work undertaken by the Members of this Assembly are a significant contribution to the work to tackle the problem's international dimension.

Wednesday, 25 June 2014

Challenges for a Federal Europe

Mr. Corneliu Chisu - I welcome the opportunity to speak on this matter, and I congratulate the rapporteur on his excellent work on the road ahead for Europe.

European integration is an ongoing project. The European Union today is the product of gradual reforms achieved through negotiation by the member states, as reflected in the current treaties culminating in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Over the course of this project, the European Union has grown from a six-member economic union to a 28-member economic and political union. These changes have transformed the European Union from its original conception as essentially a trading bloc bound by an international agreement to an entity in its own right, with all the hallmarks of a federal state, including what is de facto a constitution in the form of the European Union treaties.

It is a remarkable achievement that 28 sovereign states have joined together to create a supranational entity endowed with significant legislative, executive and judicial powers, whose legislative acts have direct effect in the member states and whose court judgments are authoritative and binding. In doing so, member states have given up an unprecedented degree of sovereignty and agreed to be governed in significant areas of national and

economic life by an entity of their own creation in which they have a voice in running its affairs.

What is even more remarkable is that the European Union is a resounding success on so many fronts: political, economic, social, cultural. Its success, I would argue, is based on its founding principles and fundamental values: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities. These values, of course, are now enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union, as cornerstones to guide European Union law making and policy development. It is these values that continue to hold out hope for many European countries that desire to become a part of the larger European project.

Although the rise of Euro scepticism and Eurosceptic political parties is a troubling development, it is worth recalling that there has always been a Eurosceptic strain in many countries. Nevertheless, the Eurosceptics have failed to weaken the European Union, because their parties are founded on intolerance, despair, negativity and exclusion. They are anathema to what the European Union symbolises for the people of Europe: freedom, hope, optimism and inclusiveness. The success – modest, it must be said – of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament elections is based on a foundation that is shaky at best, and it was achieved by playing to the fears that stem from the difficult economic situation Europeans have faced since the global financial crisis.

For most Europeans – the clear majority, in fact – the European Union and its institutions continue to offer them what they seek: freedom and opportunities to prosper.

Identities and diversities within intercultural societies

Mr. Corneliu Chisu - I thank the Assembly for this opportunity to speak. Cultural diversity is a reality everywhere. As people become increasingly mobile, physical boundaries no longer shield one culture from the influence of others. This should be embraced. Intercultural societies bring enormous benefits to a country. Not only is it in the best spirit of openness and tolerance to accept people whose cultures differ from the mainstream, but there are practical benefits for the host or receiving country.

In pure economic terms, terms that all politicians understand, immigrants of diverse backgrounds are an important source of economic growth. Immigrants, regardless of their wealth on arrival, bring enormous qualities to their new homes: resourcefulness, boundless energy and a desire to integrate, to advance in their careers, to provide opportunities for their children that might not have been available to them in their countries of origin, and to contribute to their communities. The evidence for that is undisputed and can be found in all countries that receive large numbers of immigrants. It is true of the United States of America and Canada, countries which have been built by immigrants and built on immigration – immigration from all corners of the globe, from rich and poor countries, black and white, east and west, north and south.

Those countries have reaped enormous economic benefits from the contributions of immigrants, but the benefits go beyond the economy. Immigrants have established themselves in all walks of life and in all sectors: in business, academia, government and politics, and the arts. Those successes have enriched the life of these countries. That is equally true in Europe where, thanks to the open borders created by the Schengen agreement and to the principles on which the European Union and the Council of Europe are founded – the principles of respect for human rights, dignity, tolerance and the protection of minorities – Europe has flourished in all its important dimensions. Europe

owes much of its success as a polity and as an economic market to the free movement of people and the openness with which it receives people from all parts of the world.

I welcome the resolutions proposed by the rapporteurs. Mr. Neves and Ms. Karamanli, and fully support the analysis in their background study. The message that we all should take is that continued vigilance is necessary in combating discrimination and intolerance. It will continue to rear its ugly head and occasionally manifest itself in extreme forms, such as racism and violence. When it does so we must be prepared to both recognise it and fight it aggressively. It is my hope that one day there will be no need to debate what it means to have an intercultural society. When intercultural becomes the norm, it will not be analysed from the perspective of the mainstream. It will be mainstreamed. Let us embrace it. Our societies will be diminished if we cannot openly embrace what diversity has to offer.

Thursday, 26 June 2014

Council of Europe Development Bank

Senator Michel Rivard - I am happy to have the opportunity to reveal what the Council of Europe Development Bank inspires in me. I had the good fortune to meet representatives of the Bank earlier this year when I was a member of a Canadian delegation. It was my first contact with the Bank and I must admit that the description of its work left me with a very favourable impression. The Council of Europe has so many means of action and the Bank is a unique institution. It is the instrument through which the Council of Europe can implement its many laudable social and development objectives by granting, under very favourable terms, funding for projects that would not receive it in the commercial market.

Such an institution is more than indispensable in the present climate, when many countries are having difficulties in recovering from the most significant recession in recent history and need funds to invest in their economies to stimulate the upswing. In funding projects that promote social cohesion, such as subsidised housing or the development of micro, small and medium enterprises, the Bank guarantees that the principles on which the Council of Europe was founded – democracy, human rights and the rule of law – are not sacrificed to financial objectives. Importantly, the suggested areas for reform would aim to strengthen the Bank in its role in the service of the social and economic needs of those countries and sectors in the greatest need.

I congratulate the rapporteur, Mr. Elzinga, on his work and his excellent recommendations which would ensure the viability of the Council of Europe Development Bank.

Europe's public administrations

Mr. Sean Casey - I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to address the important issue of reforms affecting public administrations in Europe and their serious effects on public services. This situation goes beyond European borders; it has an international dimension with pressures to reduce public services in the name of structural reform being felt in many countries. This is occurring in Canada as well.

The draft resolution includes a recommendation that the Assembly asks the Parliaments of the Council of Europe member States to "properly evaluate reform measures taken in the field of public administration and public service and learn from the experiences of other parliaments." I seize this opportunity to outline the situation of the public service in Canada and give a few examples of recent reforms.

The federal public service is the largest employer in Canada: it employs approximately 262 000 people in 1 600 locations across Canada and in more than 180 countries. Significant reforms have been made recently to the public service, especially in the austerity budgets of the last three years. These reforms include areas of public sector management such as financial and expenditure management, human resources and information technology.

Regarding human resources, the Canadian Government has gradually but dramatically reduced the number of public servants in the last several years. It has also reformed federal public sector pensions, notably by increasing the contribution rate of employees and raising the age of retirement from 60 to 65 for new employees. The Canadian Government has also brought changes to the public service health care plan, including increases to pensioner cost-sharing and eligibility. Recent legislative initiatives include the modification of collective bargaining rights, including the dispute resolution process and the imposition of more stringent conditions on unions where essential services are involved.

These examples of reforms are a legitimate source of widespread concern, not only for public sector employees, but for the public who rely on services provided by Governments in exchange for high levels of taxation. These concerns are similar to those expressed by the rapporteur. The report explains that, since the 1990s, but more intensely since the financial crisis of 2008, large parts of the public sector in most Council of Europe member states have been privatised, public service tasks have been outsourced and agencies have been created to deliver public services outside the control of governments. The objective of these reforms was to modernise public administration and make it more efficient, more effective and more profitable. Some of these reforms have achieved their goals. Unfortunately, others have had negative effects.

As noted by the rapporteur, “social cohesion is at the heart of the Organisation’s mission. It is therefore essential to place it at the top of the political agenda, especially in times of crisis.” I wish to add my voice to this concern based on a comparable Canadian experience. I also offer support for the recommendations of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, which are quoted in the report, to safeguard social, economic and other human rights in times of crisis. It is in times of crisis that austerity measures are taken, and they challenge the core principles that govern public administration. It is also in times of crisis that fundamental rights and freedoms are challenged by the effects of such measures. It is important to make sure that our common fundamental values, rights and freedoms are not sacrificed in the name of economic expediency.

Address by Mr Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

Mr. Corneliu Chisu – I congratulate you on your election. Canada has condemned in the strongest terms Russia’s military intervention in Crimea and southern and eastern Ukraine. Those actions are a clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Canada does not recognise the legitimacy of the outcomes of the independence referendums in eastern and southern Ukraine or Russia’s attempt to annex Crimea. How will you put an end to the further destabilisation of Ukraine and restore its national territorial integrity?

Mr. Poroshenko – First, let me thank all the countries who participated in the last group of questions. Canada was one of the first to support us in our independence, as it was the first country to recognise Ukrainian independence. All this time, Canada has been one of the strongest advocates of Ukrainian independence and has supported Ukrainian

sovereignty. We have a responsibility and we are absolutely sure that, together, we can win the fight for peace and provide reform. We have already had very effective bilateral consultation with the Canadian Government. The Canadian Prime Minister attended my inauguration and I am very satisfied with his perspective on Canadian assistance with reform.

(...)

There is a very high level of responsibility on us, and on me personally, now that so many have views on Ukraine. I understand how important it is to be adequate to this expectation. I understand that it is probably the last chance for a democratic, European Ukraine. We need to win this battle together – it is that simple.

Thanks to all of you for your support and for this session. It is very important to us to have such support at present, as it was in the past when you took decisions on the Crimean occupation and aggression. I hope to have your support in the future.

Friday 27, June 2014

Child-friendly juvenile justice

Mr. Sean Casey - We are now living in a law and order society in which otherwise sensible citizens have succumbed to the fear of crime, a fear which many politicians have exploited, believing that there are votes to be gained or funds to be raised. Thus we have sacrificed freedoms to manufacture a sense of security. Some of the fears are justified, but in the case of children, the fears are, for the most part, irrational and unfounded.

The law and order impulse – the impulse to get tough on crime – particularly the need to punish offenders harshly, has resulted in severe measures being imposed on children who run afoul of the law. Such measures are often disproportionate to the severity of the crimes that children are accused of having committed.

“Tough on crime” in the case of children is, in reality, “dumb on crime”. There is an important difference between perceptions of youth crime, whether it is increasing and its nature and severity, and the reality. The reality in Canada, and I expect in much of Europe, is quite different. Unfortunately, youth criminal justice policy and law have been built around perceptions, not reality, and not the evidence. Canadian crime statistics have shown a general decline in crime since 1991, reaching its lowest point in 2006, with declines also seen in youth crime. These studies also show that serious youth violence is a rare occurrence even if the public believe it is more prevalent.

The other important reality is that youth crime is closely linked to the economic and social climate in which a child is raised. I do not doubt for a moment that poverty, lack of role models and proper guidance, as well as lack of job and educational opportunities, are the major factors behind youth crime. This is supported by the evidence that youth crime tends to involve minor theft or other petty crimes.

In Canada, our criminal justice policies for children are suffering the same fate as those in Europe. The age of criminal responsibility has been lowered to age 12. For some exceptional crimes committed by children, a life sentence is considered appropriate. Although it is claimed that our youth criminal justice laws are based on the principle of the diminished moral blameworthiness of youth, and that rehabilitation and reintegration are the goals, the tendency is toward more severe punishment for children and youth.

The evidence from various international jurisdictions in Europe, Canada and the United States of America suggests that traditional punitive approaches for dealing with youth criminality have proven ineffective. Many of these jurisdictions are now looking at so-called holistic approaches including alternative sentencing, diversion from the court system, community-based initiatives and focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration. These approaches are more humane and respectful, as well as more effective in dealing with the root causes of youth crime.

As the justice critic for my party, the Liberal Party of Canada, this concerns me. But it should concern all of us because our children are our future and we should ensure that they are not deprived of opportunities to fully develop their potential and become fully-functioning members of society because of youthful indiscretions, lack of adult guidance, or lack of economic opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

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| ASSOCIATION | Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association |
| ACTIVITY | Third Part of the 2014 Ordinary Session of the PACE |
| DESTINATION | Strasbourg, France |
| DATES | June 23-27, 2014 |
| DELEGATION | |
| SENATE | Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS | Mr. Corneliu Chisu, M.P. Head of Delegation Mr. Sean Casey, M.P. |
| STAFF | Mr. Maxime Ricard, Association Secretary (outgoing) Mrs. Guyanne Desforges, Association Secretary (incoming) |
| TRANSPORTATION | \$20,171.15 |
| ACCOMMODATION | \$8,214.00 |
| HOSPITALITY | \$512.42 |
| PER DIEMS | \$3,707.49 |
| OFFICIAL GIFTS | |
| MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES | |
| TOTAL | \$32,605.06 |