

Canada - Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada - Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the 30th European Parliament –
Canada Inter-parliamentary Meeting**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Brussels, Belgium
November 20 – 22, 2007**

Report

A. Introduction and Overview

A delegation of three parliamentarians from the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association traveled to Brussels, Belgium, for the 30th European Parliament–Canada Inter-parliamentary Meeting between the Association and the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada (DRC). The delegation was led by Association president the Hon. Lorna Milne, Senator, and included from the Senate the Hon. Yoine Goldstein and from the House of Commons Ms. Carole Freeman, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by association secretary Philippe Méla and advisor Marcus Pistor.

In addition to meetings with the DRC, the delegation met with senior officials from the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, the Vice President of the European Parliament (EP), chairpersons or rapporteurs of key EP committees, and officials from Canada's Mission to the European Union (EU). The delegation was joined at some of the meetings by H.E. Ross Hornby, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union, other officials from Canada's Mission to the EU, and by Mr. Christos Sirros, Delegate General of Québec in Brussels, and two of his officials. Finally, the delegates were honored with a dinner hosted by DRC Chairman Sean O'Neachtain and a lunch hosted by Gérard Onesta, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

In preparation for the meetings in Brussels, members of the Association met with His Excellency Dorian Prince, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Canada. Delegates also received a very good briefing from officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

B. Program

1. Briefing by H.E. Ross Hornby, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union, and Canadian Officials

Ambassador Hornby welcomed the delegation and opened the briefing with an overview of Canada-EU relations. He noted the growing importance of the European Parliament – a trend that continues with the new EU Reform Treaty. This treaty was agreed to by EU leaders in Lisbon in October 2007 and signed in that city in December – as a result it is referred to as the Lisbon Treaty. It is expected to be ratified by the end of 2008, in time for the 2009 elections to the European Parliament. The treaty will make significant changes to EU institutions and to the respective roles of the EP and national parliaments. Among other things, the European Parliament will gain powers in the EU legislative process and it will elect the President of the European Commission, based on a proposal from the Council made in consultation with the EP leadership. In addition, international agreements and treaties entered into by the EU, which affect budgetary matters, will have to be approved by the parliament. As Ambassador Hornby noted, the strengthened role of the EP will mean that third countries like Canada will have to pay closer attention to the European Parliament, and thus visits by Canadian parliamentarians are becoming increasingly important.

The briefing then turned to political relations between Canada and the EU, in particular cooperation in security matters and crisis management. Officials discussed ongoing cooperation and consultations on Burma, Haiti, Darfur, Chad, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. Next, the briefing focused on commercial relations, specifically bilateral discussions on the costs and benefits of an enhanced economic partnership that would encompass a broad range of areas and issues, from reducing trade barriers to regulatory cooperation and the mutual recognition of professional standards and qualifications. Current efforts to explore the untapped potential of Canada-EU economic relations, in particular by reducing barriers to trade and investment in order to improve competitiveness, have been spearheaded by Quebec Premier Jean Charest. Closely linked to a possible new transatlantic partnership is the issue of inter-provincial trade barriers in Canada, which EU officials have long seen as an obstacle to closer economic cooperation and deeper integration. The current discussion between officials for the first time includes all of these issues and several Canadian provinces are engaged in the process. In addition to political cooperation and a possible enhanced economic partnership, officials briefed the delegation on EU policies and debates on climate change, energy security, fisheries and the seal hunt.

2. Meeting with Alan Seatter, Director Responsible for North America, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, DG External Relations, European Commission⁽¹⁾

The first part of a wide-ranging discussion that began with a briefing by Mr. Seatter on bilateral relations and on EU policies of importance to Canada focused on political cooperation on international issues. Mr. Seatter pointed out that the EU is on a “journey to the unknown,” especially in its rapidly evolving role as a global actor. For example, more than 60,000 military and civilian peacekeepers from EU countries are currently deployed in most of the world’s trouble spots; and the EU is playing an increasingly important and well-received role in elections monitoring and assistance. Canada has participated in both types of EU missions and is seen as a valued partner. At the same time, the EU would like Canada to play a greater role in some regions, in particular in the Middle East and with regard to Iran. Mr. Seatter explained that, once ratified and implemented, the EU Reform Treaty will have a significant impact on the EU’s Common and Security Policy, including by (i) creating the position of an EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) who will

⁽¹⁾ The Commission is the EU’s bureaucracy responsible for initiating EU decision-making in most policy areas by preparing proposals for decision by the two decision-making institutions: the Parliament and the Council. Thus, the legislative process begins with Commission proposals which need to be in line with the Treaties. As the EU’s executive branch, the European Commission is also in charge of assuring the correct and timely implementation of EU legislation in Member States, and may refer any Member State to the European Court of Justice if needs be, and also demand that fines be imposed on the Member States which do not respect EU legislation. Finally, the Commission represents the EU internationally, notably in bilateral and global trade negotiations and through a network of diplomatic missions or ‘Delegations’.

simultaneously be Vice-President of the European Commission and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) representative of the Council of the European Union (see footnote 1); (ii) creating a single diplomatic service, the European External Action Service, which will be composed of officials from relevant departments of the Council secretariat and of the European Commission, as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services; and (iii) giving the EU a single legal personality, allowing it to conclude international treaties in a range of policy areas. These changes should make it easier for third countries, like Canada, to work with the EU as a partner in international affairs.

Commenting on the ongoing study of “the costs and benefits of a closer economic partnership by examining existing barriers, especially non-tariff, to the flow of goods, services and capital, and estimating the potential benefits of removing such barriers,” agreed to at the 2007 Canada-EU Summit in Berlin, Mr. Seatter explained that many European business people and officials don’t see the need for a closer partnership. With investment and trade growing and few, if any, major bilateral trade disputes in recent years, the bilateral economic relationship is not seen as problematic or as requiring attention. However, as Mr. Seatter noted, there is tremendous, unexploited potential for economic integration in the transatlantic economy. In response to questions from Canadian delegates, he explained that, from the EU’s point of view, the main obstacles to closer partnership are the inter-provincial trade barriers in Canada. The EU is particularly interested in having its concerns about public procurement and geographic indicators addressed in bilateral discussions.

In the discussion of climate change and energy security, Canadian delegates explained Canada’s position and specific challenges, as well as policy responses at the federal and provincial level. Mr. Seatter discussed the approach taken by the EU, which is shaped by several goals. First: the EU would like to present as united a front as possible with its partners in the global negotiations that will follow the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali (December 2007). Second: in doing so, it wants to negotiate clear, long-term targets for greenhouse gas emissions to create a predictable policy environment for business and research. Third: together with like-minded partners among developed countries, it wants to bring the major emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – on board. In the process, its wants to address three policy goals: promoting the development and deployment of new technologies to improve energy efficiency and renewable energies; combating deforestation; and developing a global carbon market.

3. Meeting with Dr. Marek Grela, Director of Transatlantic Relations, and Dr. Christiane Hoehn, Canada Desk, Secretariat of the Council of the European Union⁽²⁾

⁽²⁾ The Council of the European Union represents the member states. It is also the legislative (in some policy areas the executive) arm of the EU. The Council meets in nine different configurations: General Affairs and External Relations; Economic and Financial Affairs; Cooperation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA); Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs; Competitiveness; Transport,

In his introductory remarks, Dr. Grela explained the evolution of the EU from an organization primarily concerned with economic integration to an increasingly important actor in international affairs, in particular in the area of global trade relations, development assistance, and foreign and security policies. He pointed out that, over the past 15 years, the EU had developed a Common – not a *single* – Foreign and Security Policy. Despite significant obstacles – including the historical ties of many EU states to different regions of the world and the importance of foreign policy to national identity and the principle of state sovereignty – developments such as the end of the Cold War, German unification, and the disintegration of Yugoslavia have forced EU member states to develop common perspectives and responses to international policy challenges. As a result, the EU has agreed on a common security strategy⁽³⁾ that outlines the principles and instruments for addressing security threats; it is developing its own rapid reaction force for crisis management missions; and it is creating the institutional capacity for a more effective CFSP that can cope with new challenges such as migration, organized crime and international terrorism.

Canadian delegates raised the question of the effects a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Dr. Grela pointed out that ESDP is not seen or designed as an alternative to NATO, but that it complements the Alliance. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the NATO mission was replaced by an EU mission that draws on NATO assets and planning. Also, EU missions tend to be in the area of crisis management, integrating military with policing and civilian response elements. This reflects a view among many in Europe that NATO's role is more in the area of traditional or 'hard' defence, while the ESDP is geared towards developing integrated crisis response mechanisms. Canadian delegates asked about the EU's position on the current situation in Kosovo and the likely unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovar leaders. Noting that achieving a negotiated settlement by the December 10 deadline was highly unlikely and that,

Telecommunications and Energy; Agriculture and Fisheries; Environment; Education, Youth and Culture. Council meetings are attended by one minister from each member state (as a result it is often referred to as Council of Ministers). By contrast, the European Council is a meeting of the heads of state or government of the EU member states plus the President of the European Commission. Its meetings are therefore often referred to as summits. They take place four times a year. While the Council of the EU has a 'General Secretariat' which plays an important role in particular in supporting the work of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, member states play a vital role, including through the Council presidency which rotates among member governments every six months.

⁽³⁾ *A Secure Europe in a Better World – The European Security Strategy*, approved by the European Council held in Brussels on 12 December 2003 and drafted under the responsibilities of the EU High Representative Javier Solana, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g.

therefore, a unilateral declaration of independence was unavoidable, Dr. Grela explained the different perspectives among EU members on this issue and talked about the concern in the EU that a unilateral declaration of independence could trigger other developments in the Western Balkans.

With regard to the final topic of discussion, transatlantic relations, Dr. Hoehn pointed out that the EU's bilateral relationships with both Canada and the United States are growing quickly, both in terms of the number of policy areas of cooperation and of the depth of cooperation. Dr. Grela noted that the perception of Canada in the EU is very positive: It is seen as a responsible partner and as having played a significant role in Europe's transformation over the past 20 years.

4. First Working Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada (DRC) (4) Political Relations and Developments in the EU

The meeting opened with introductory remarks by Senator Milne, leader of the Canadian delegation and President of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, and Sean O'Neachtain, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Canada, who noted the long-standing relationship, the close historic links between Canada and Europe, and the many and growing number of areas of cooperation.

The first major topic of discussion was cooperation in international security and crisis management, and in particular the international mission in Afghanistan. Manuel Medina Ortega (Spain) for the DRC and André Brie, European Parliament rapporteur on Afghanistan, introduced the topic. Both explained the background to European positions on Afghanistan, in particular with respect to the overall strategy behind the international mission and to calls from Canada, the Netherlands, the United States and other allies for greater troop commitments from European countries to the combat operations in Southern Afghanistan. According to Mr. Brie, views in the European Parliament are wide-ranging, but there is strong agreement on three issues: the commitment to strengthen human rights, improve the situation of women, and end the death penalty in Afghanistan. There is also concern about the extent to which the current strategy and a range of national efforts in specific areas such as police training are appropriate for bringing security, democracy and sustainable development to the country. Mr. Brie called for a complete re-evaluation of the international mission.

Canadian delegates emphasized the importance of the international mission in Afghanistan and the need for a stronger commitment among some of the major European allies, especially to all aspects of the military mission. They noted that the international community has an obligation to the Afghan people; 'just pulling out' is therefore not an option. The discussion then moved to the domestic political situation in Canada, specifically to the effects of having a minority government and to the situation in Québec following the provincial elections in March 2007.

In the second part of this meeting, Canadian delegates had the opportunity to discuss the EU Reform Treaty with long-time Members of the European

⁽⁴⁾ Website of the EP Delegation for Relations with Canada:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/noneurope/id/d_ca/default_en.htm.

Parliament (MEPs) Elmar Brok and Enrique Baron Crespo, who represented the European Parliament at the 2007 Intergovernmental Conference that negotiated the Reform Treaty. The two MEPs explained the new treaty in the context of the enlargement of the Union from six countries in 1958 to 27 in 2007, which has put increasing pressure on its governance and decision-making institutions and procedures. In addition, the EU has become a global player requiring the right instruments and institutions for that role. Finally, its growing importance in the development of national-level policies has resulted in pressures to make the EU decision and policy-making system more democratic and transparent. While the EU Reform Treaty addresses these issues quite effectively, the MEPs pointed out that it would still not make the EU a state, as sovereignty continues to rest with its member countries. In the discussion that followed, Canadian delegates raised a number of issues, in particular regarding the expected effect of the treaty on the EU's foreign and defence policies, as well as the Union's relationship with the Council of Europe and NATO. Finally, MEPs and Canadian delegates explored the question of how European integration has affected national minorities and sub-national governments

5. Second Working Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada (DRC): Economic Relations, Fisheries

Commercial relations between Canada and the EU and the prospects for an enhanced economic partnership were the first topic of discussion during the second working meeting with the DRC. After an introductory discussion, Mr. Rupert Schlegelmilch, head of the unit responsible for EU trade relations with the Americas at the European Commission, and Jean-Benoît Leblanc, trade policy counselor at the Canadian mission to the EU, gave parliamentarians an update on bilateral discussions, in particular the study of “the costs and benefits of a closer economic partnership by examining existing barriers, especially non-tariff, to the flow of goods, services and capital, and estimating the potential benefits of removing such barriers,” agreed to at the 2007 Canada-EU Summit in Berlin. Both sides have agreed on a methodology for the study. It will be concluded in the Spring of 2008, and the issue will then be on the agenda for the next Canada-EU summit, which will take place under French EU-Presidency in October 2008 in Canada. Parliamentarians from both sides expressed their support for moving this agenda forward, but Canadian delegates also noted that there are serious concerns in Canada about some EU policies – in particular the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) – and their effects on Canadians. The discussion of agriculture trade and subsidies highlighted the shared concern on both sides of the Atlantic over the social, cultural and regional importance of agriculture and the need to pay greater attention in international discussions to social problems in rural communities.

By way of follow-up to last year's inter-parliamentary meeting in Ottawa, fisheries cooperation was the next topic on the agenda. Both sides agreed that fisheries policy and management has in the past paid too little attention to sustainability issues, a fact made worse by modern technologies that have facilitated more intensive fishing of stocks. This has resulted in the overfishing of many fish stocks. The decline or even collapse of major fish stocks, such Atlantic cod, has had serious economic and social consequences for many coastal communities in Europe and Canada, including in Scotland, the Gaspésie region of Québec, and Newfoundland. Ian Hudgton, an MEP from Scotland, was particularly critical in this context of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. Pointing to the failure of member states of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to agree on sufficient reductions in the quota for bluefin tuna, Canadian delegates noted that, despite the growing awareness of the dire environmental and social consequences of sustained overfishing, it is still very difficult to come to political agreement internationally on the need for significant reductions in fishing quotas.

Climate change was the last item on the agenda of this year's inter-parliamentary meeting. Mr. Guido Sacconi, Chairman of the European Parliament's Temporary Committee on Climate Change, introduced the topic with an overview of his committee's work and the approach taken by the European Union more generally. Mr. Sacconi noted that the EU has established very

ambitious goals for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and that it is committed to reaching them regardless of the outcome of new global negotiations. The targets agreed to by EU leaders in March 2007 are as follows:

The EU has ... made a firm independent commitment to reduce its emissions by at least 20% by 2020, As part of the EU's climate change and energy strategy, the EU is also committed to increase its energy efficiency by 20% and achieve a 20% renewable energy target by 2020. Furthermore, the EU is willing to commit to a reduction of 30% of the EU greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990, as its contribution to a global and comprehensive agreement for the period beyond 2012, provided that other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emission reductions and economically more advanced developing countries adequately contribute according to their responsibilities and capabilities.⁽⁵⁾

Mr. Sacconi argued that more international cooperation on scientific research and technology development is needed, both with respect to the causes of climate change and ways to combat it, and in order to address its environmental, social and economic consequences. In their contributions to the debate, Canadian delegates explained Canada's challenges and concerns and discussed the position of the Government of Canada. They expressed concern and disappointment with what some of them called the government's denial of the seriousness of climate change and the decision to distance itself from the Kyoto Protocol. Canadian delegates also noted that the position of the Canadian government has changed over the past year and talked about provincial initiatives to cut greenhouse gas emissions more significantly and quickly. MEPs, for their part, expressed serious concerns about what they see as a profound shift in Canada's position on climate change. For example, with regard to Canada's decision to join the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, Duarte Freitas (Portugal) asked: "Is Canada going to continue down this path or return to the proactive path of the past?"

⁽⁵⁾ Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, "EU Position Paper on Climate Change and Related Events," 19 September 2007.

C. Conclusion

During its visit to Brussels, the Canadian delegation held meetings with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada, senior Members of the EP, officials from the Canadian Mission to the EU, and with senior officials from the European Commission and the Council of the EU. The meetings highlighted the importance of an ongoing inter-parliamentary dialogue for members of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, but also for Canadian parliamentarians more generally. The EU is becoming an increasingly important global actor in many policy areas of interest to Canada. In addition Canada-EU relations are growing in scope and depth. These developments will only become more significant with changes to the EU institutions resulting from the EU Reform Treaty that is currently being ratified. As a result of these changes, the EU institutions the Association has dealt with – the European Parliament, as well as the Commission and the Council – are gaining in importance, especially in the area of foreign and security policy. In addition, EU policy and decision-making will become more democratic by giving the European Parliament a greater role. It will therefore be important to examine how the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, and Parliament in general, can strengthen its relations with the changing European Parliament and other EU institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Lorna Milne, Senator
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	30 th European Parliament – Canada Inter-parliamentary Meeting
DESTINATION	Brussels, Belgium
DATES	November 20 to 22, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Lorna Milne, Senator Hon. Yoine Goldstein, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Carole Freeman, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Philippe Méla, Association Secretary Mr. Marcus Pistor, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$17,794.39
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,955.43
HOSPITALITY	\$
PER DIEMS	\$ 806.36
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 230.22
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 8.23
TOTAL	\$23,794.63