

Canada - Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada - Europe

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Meeting of the Committee on
Economic Affairs and Development of the Council of Europe
Parliamentary Assembly at the Organization for Economic
Co-operation and Development (OECD) and at the Third Part
of the 2010 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Paris, Strasbourg, France
June 18 to 26, 2010**

Report

I. Meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

INTRODUCTION

The delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association composed of Senator Grant Mitchell travelled to Paris, France, to attend a meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Each fall, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) holds a debate on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the state of the world economy, prepared by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development. Preparatory meetings are held at the OECD in Paris in June. The committee meeting and the annual debate are unusual in that they allow delegations from OECD countries that are not PACE members (Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the Republic of Korea)¹ full participation and voting rights – hence “enlarged” committee/debate. They are, therefore, important opportunities for Canadian parliamentarians to participate in international discussions of global economic affairs and to contribute to the parliamentary oversight of the OECD.

The Parliament of Canada has participated in the meetings at the OECD and in the enlarged debate in Strasbourg for many years. This involvement played a central role in leading Parliament to seek observer status with PACE, which it was granted in 1997.

A. Meeting at the Canadian Mission to the OECD

Senator Mitchell was briefed by Mr. Gordon Boissonneault, the Economic Counsellor for the Mission. He explained the functioning and mandate of the Mission headed by Ambassador Paul-Henri Lapointe, mainly supporting all of Canada’s interactions with the OECD and monitoring the governance of the institution. Canada was a founding member and 2011 will mark the 50th

¹ Of the OECD countries that are not members of the Council of Europe, these are the four that send delegations to the enlarged debate on a regular basis. Legislators from the United States do not normally attend.

anniversary. The OECD has members on each continent working together on common issues to support growth and development and social advancement. In June 2010, 3 new members were added – Israel, Slovenia and Estonia – and Russia is on an accession track to become the 35th member. To become a member, candidates must demonstrate that they adhere to a wide range of common standards in areas such as open investment and trade, competitive markets, sound corporate governance, transparent government finances and many others. In recent years, the OECD has enhanced its engagement with the major emerging market economies of China, India, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa. A challenge is balancing the need to work with these big global actors with the need to preserve the high policy standards that characterize full members. At times, this can be a delicate balancing act.

The primary role of the OECD is to measure and collect data and conduct analytical work on a broad range of issues for the benefit of both members and non-members. It has a permanent professional staff – the Secretariat - of about 2500 and a budget of about 320 million Euros (Canada is the 7th largest contributor with contributions of roughly \$15million). The work is mandated and discussed in over 200 committees and sub-bodies that bring together practitioners and experts from member countries. This is a unique aspect of the OECD – that it is not just academics making abstract policy recommendations – it is actual public policy practitioners who meet as peers to share experiences and develop solutions to common problems. This is an important distinction because it means that all major OECD publications have been vetted through member governments via a consensus process. Therefore, advice emanating from the OECD have been approved by members so in principle should be taken seriously. Peer review is also an important element of the OECD's work. The OECD conducts an economic survey of each member country approximately every 2 years and a delegation from Finance Canada came to the OECD to discuss the draft survey of Canada with the full committee. On the basis of that discussion, the draft will be revised and published later this year. Peer reviews are also undertaken in environmental policy, development assistance, regulatory reform and most recently, a new process to ensure countries have transparent tax systems and do not support tax evasion.

The International Energy Association is the OECD's sister organisation and recently conducted a very positive review of Canada's energy policies.

While most of the OECD's influence comes via defining best practices and evaluating country performance, there are some areas where it defines international standards. This is referred to as "soft law". Probably the most important area in this regard is tax policy. The OECD is the primary international forum for tax policy – standards on exchange of information, treatment of revenues etc. The OECD also works on standards for corporate governance, treatment of export credits, standards for capital movements and foreign direct investment and others. An important growing area is anti-corruption and anti-bribery.

- Another big initiative currently underway is "green growth". The OECD is trying to carve out a niche in this area, defining green growth quite broadly so that it encompasses the full range of OECD expertise. The idea is to develop energy and environmental policies that spark innovation that simultaneously promotes growth, prosperity and a clean, sustainable environment.

- The OECD has been very engaged in the response to the financial and economic crisis. The crisis features prominently in all committee discussions and early in the crisis, the Secretariat produced a “strategic response” document that outlined how each part of the organization will make a contribution. The OECD came out early in favour of significant fiscal stimulus programs that would be targeted, timely and temporary. They also strongly advised against early retirement policies as a response to mounting unemployment. These had been used in Europe in the 80s, with damaging long-term effects. Finally, the OECD warned against protectionism in both trade and investment. For the most-part, members have followed OECD advice. The organization is active in the debate over what reforms to the financial sector are appropriate. They are also closely monitoring ongoing developments, such as in the pension and insurance sectors.
- A key challenge for the organization going forward will be maintaining its relevancy in a changing world. At one time, the group accounted for almost all global economic output. Now, with the explosion of emerging market economies, there will need to be a balance between ensuring the organization includes the right players with maintaining the like-mindedness of the organization that has allowed it to operate so well as a consensus based group.

Recent OECD reviews of Canada

- Economic Survey of Canada (forthcoming)
- Energy Policy Review of Canada
- Territorial Review of Toronto
- Rural Policy Review of the Province of Quebec
- Jobs for Youth Canada
- 2007 Review of CIDA.

B. Program at the OECD

8:30 **Arrival of participants**

9:00 **Welcome by Chairs**

Ertuğrul Kumcuoğlu, Co-Chair, Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly; and *Aart de Geus*, OECD Deputy Secretary-General

9:05 **Report back from the Ministerial Conferences Meeting (MCM) and OECD's outreach and enlargement strategy** (invitation to Estonia, Israel and Slovenia to become members; enhanced cooperation with Russia, Brazil, China, etc.)

Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General

10:00 **Economic Outlook and Financing Future Growth**

Sveinbjorn Blondal, Head of the Macroeconomic Policy Division, Economics Department

10:50 **Coffee break**

11:10 **Presentation of the Council of Europe Draft Report**

Juan Moscoso del Prado Hernandez, Rapporteur

11:20 **The OECD's work on international tax cooperation and tax havens**

Jeffrey Owens, Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration

12:10 **Supporting innovation**

Andrew Wyckoff, Director of the OECD Science, Technology and Industry Directorate

13:00 **Lunch, Room C, Château**

Hosted by Aart de Geus, OECD Deputy Secretary-General

14:30- **Corporate governance: aftermath of the financial crisis**

16:30

Grant Kirkpatrick, Acting Head of Corporate Affairs Division

Council of Europe delegations re-convene in the Conference Centre CC9 for an internal meeting where the following was examined in camera:

1. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the world economy in 2009-2010

Rapporteur: Mr Juan Moscoso del Prado, Spain, SOC

[AS/EC (2010) 12; draft programme]

2. The political consequences of the economic crisis

Rapporteur for opinion: Ms Anna Lilliehöök, Sweden, EPP/CD

[AS/EC (2010) 28]

3. Over-indebtedness of States: a danger for democracy and human rights

Rapporteur: Mr Peter Omtzigt, Netherlands, EPP/CD

[AS/EC (2010) 30]

4. **Promoting the development of microcredit**

Rapporteur: Mr Márton Braun, Hungary, EPP/CD

[AS/EC (2010) 29]

II. THIRD PART OF THE 2010 ORDINARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE (PACE)

A. Overview

Senator Mitchell was joined in Strasbourg by Mrs. Francine Lalonde, M.P. and by Association Secretary Philippe Méla to take part in the Third Part of the 2010 Ordinary Session of PACE.

This summer session featured a full order of business with a wide range of topics being debated in committees, political groups, and in the Assembly. The Assembly held regular debates on the following topics:

- Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the 2011 financial year;
- Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee;
- **Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus Region;**

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) has urged Russia to fight terrorism in the North Caucasus by “respecting fundamental rights and the tenets of the rule of law”, by following the example of other countries that have had to face it, and by working more closely with local NGOs and the Council of Europe.

In a resolution unanimously approved and based on a report by Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE), the Assembly expressed “compassion and solidarity” with the families of those who had suffered terrorist attacks, but said the human rights situation in the North Caucasus was “the most serious and most delicate” in the whole Council of Europe area. The parliamentarians noted:

- in the Chechen Republic, despite impressive reconstruction efforts, “a climate of pervading fear”, disappearances of government opponents and human rights defenders, reprisals against the families of suspected fighters, and intimidation of the media and civil society, all in an atmosphere of “personalisation of power”;
- in Ingushetia, the growth of “constructive dialogue” with civil society since the appointment of the new President, but also an alarming upsurge of violence since 2009, including murders and disappearances;
- in Dagestan, an outbreak of fresh terrorist acts, prompting responses from the security forces which “were not always lawful and productive”, putting in peril the admirable age-old tradition of peaceable religious cohabitation there.

Addressing the Assembly as part of the debate, the President of Ingushetia Yunus-Bek Yevkurov said there had been “enormous progress” in the region in the last three or four years, and pledged to uphold human rights and punish violations. “As President I, more than anyone, am interested in turning the North Caucasus into a zone of order – we are the ones who live there.”

In their resolution, the parliamentarians pointed out that the European Court of Human Rights had been compelled to assume a role of “last-ditch protection” for many victims in the region, finding grave and repeated violations of fundamental rights which illustrate a “climate of impunity”. This and the passiveness of the authorities undermine the population’s trust in the security forces and “feed the nefarious spiral of violence,” they said.

They also said there were strong indications that the Chechen power, or at least circles close to it, were directly implicated in the murder of Umar Israilov on the streets of Vienna.

They recommended that the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers directly monitor Russia’s commitments as regards the situation in the North Caucasus.

- **The situation in Kosovo* and the role of the Council of Europe;**

The PACE adopted a recommendation that advocates greater Council of Europe involvement in Kosovo beside other international partners such as EULEX and OSCE. The parliamentarians feel that a larger commitment by the Organisation could help “raising standards in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law”, and enable the population of Kosovo to enjoy an equivalent level of rights as that upheld by the Council of Europe.

According to the text adopted on the basis of the report by Björn von Sydow (Sweden, SOC), “the poor respect for the rule of law affects the everyday lives of all persons in Kosovo, irrespective of the community they belong to, and undermines their trust in the political system.” Despite the reforms being made to the administration and the judiciary, much remains to be done to enhance the democratic functioning of the institutions and ensure a level of governance which would bring Kosovo into line with Council of Europe standards.

Consequently, the Organisation should “broaden the range of its activities in Kosovo” and demonstrate flexibility and imagination in finding formulas to apply its monitoring mechanisms to Kosovo while respecting its current policy of status-neutrality.

The Assembly for its part decided “to initiate a dialogue with representatives of the political forces elected to the Kosovo Assembly on issues of common interest, while taking into account the legitimate interests and concerns of Serbia”.

*All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

- **The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe;**

At the end of a debate on the situation of Roma in Europe, the PACE said it is shocked by recent outrages against this minority in Europe.

It is the “reflect of an increasing trend in Europe towards anti-Gypsyism of the worst kind”, a situation that is “reminiscent of the darkest hours in Europe’s history”. On the base the proposals by the rapporteur József Berényi (Slovak Republic, EPP/CD), the adopted text calls on member States for determined measures in terms of access to education, employment, health services and housing or social integration.

Governments should “unequivocally condemn all attacks” on Roma living areas and camps and prosecute those responsible and take “urgent measures to prevent further forced evictions” of Roma camps”.

The parliamentarians encouraged the national delegations to the Assembly “to include members of the Roma minority if they are represented in their parliament”.

- **Readmission agreements: a mechanism for returning irregular migrants;**
- **Voluntary return programmes: an effective, humane and cost-effective mechanism for returning irregular migrants;**

In a joint debate, the PACE called on member States to only apply readmission agreements in the cases of countries which respect human rights and have a fully functioning asylum system. This is fundamental, the parliamentarians said, to protect irregular immigrants, especially third-country nationals who may risk finding themselves in a country which is not theirs of origin and where they have limited social rights and no opportunities to submit an asylum application. According to the rapporteur Tineke Strik (Netherlands, SOC), “the chain of readmission agreements will hinder the chances of refugees to reach a safe haven”. The adopted text based on her proposals urges towards greater transparency by compiling statistics on and monitoring the implementation of readmission agreements.

In a second text also adopted, based on a report by Ozlem Turkone (Turkey, EPP/CD) PACE invited member states to promote assisted voluntary returns favouring programmes suggested by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which include: pre-departure counselling, giving current information about their home region and assistance in obtaining the necessary documents; then transportation assistance whether financially or in practical terms according to need; and finally post arrival assistance which ensures a sustainable return and helps development in the country of origin through training and employment opportunities.

- **Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe;**

There should be no general prohibition on wearing the burqa and the niqab or other religious clothing, the PACE has said – though it added that legal restrictions may be justified “for security purposes, or where the public or professional functions of individuals require their religious neutrality, or that their face can be seen”.

In a resolution unanimously adopted today, the Assembly said the veiling of women is often perceived as “a symbol of the subjugation of women to men” but a general ban would deny women “who genuinely and freely desire to do so” their right to cover their face.

However, the parliamentarians added: “No woman should be compelled to wear religious apparel by her community or family. Any act of oppression, sequestration or violence constitutes a crime that must be punished by law.” European governments should also seek to educate Muslim women on their rights, as well as their families and communities, and encourage them to take part in public and professional life.

The Assembly, approving a report on Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia prepared by Mogens Jensen (Denmark, SOC), also called on Switzerland to repeal as soon as possible its general ban on the construction of minarets, which it described as discriminatory.

- **A joint debate on the state of democracy in Europe:**
 - **Extra-institutional actors in the democratic system**

The Assembly has warned that the influence of some “extra-institutional actors” on the democratic process – for example, those involved in criminal activity – is a matter for concern, and called for greater transparency. Debating a report by Hendrik Daems (Belgium, ALDE), the parliamentarians said that influence which stems from special interests which are opaque was particularly worrying, and pledged to look into the question more deeply.

- **The political consequences of the economic crisis**

In a resolution adopted on the basis of the report by Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania, EPP/CD), the Assembly recommended that its member states “adopt a less national policy and a more European coordinated ... reaction to face the global economic crisis”. Governments should also “pay more attention to the fight against corruption inside state institutions”. Furthermore, the PACE calls upon national parliaments to “monitor closely the reform process of economic and financial governance”.

- **Democracy in Europe: crisis and perspectives**

The Assembly proposed a set of measures aimed at enhancing people's participation in the conduct of public affairs. They include the elaboration of an Additional Protocol to the ECHR guaranteeing the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs as a human right and a fundamental political freedom. The adopted text, based on the report by Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC), also proposes to set up a Strasbourg Democracy Forum as an umbrella structure providing an international reference in the field of democracy and a laboratory for new ideas.

- **The state of democracy in Europe and the progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure**

After a debate on the state of democracy in Europe and the progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure, the Assembly said some of the member countries assessed were still in need of electoral reform in spite of a general improvement noted in election laws. Parliamentarians discussed how well democratic institutions are working in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco, Moldova, Montenegro, and Serbia while Bulgaria was involved in post-monitoring dialogue.

- **The handling of the H1N1 pandemic: more transparency needed**

At the end of a debate on the handling of the H1N1 pandemic, the PACE endorsed the conclusions of its Health Committee, which were published on 4 June last.

According to the Assembly, the handling of the pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), EU health agencies and national governments led to a “waste of large sums of public money, and unjustified scares and fears about the health risks faced by the European public”. The adopted text says there was “overwhelming evidence that the seriousness of the pandemic was vastly overrated by WHO”, resulting in a distortion of public health priorities.

The parliamentarians identified, as did the rapporteur Paul Flynn (United Kingdom, SOC), “grave shortcomings” in the transparency of decision-making about the outbreak, generating concerns about the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on decisions taken. Plummeting confidence in such advice could prove “disastrous” in the case of a severe future pandemic, they said.

The WHO has been “highly defensive”, the adopted text underlines, and unwilling to accept that a change in the definition of a pandemic was made, or to revise its prognosis of the Swine Flu outbreak. The WHO and European health institutions were not willing to publish the names and declarations of interest of the members of the WHO Emergency Committee and relevant European advisory bodies directly involved in recommendations concerning the pandemic.

The Assembly did set out a series of urgent recommendations for greater transparency and better governance in public health, as well as safeguards against what it called “undue influence by vested interests”. It called for a public fund to support independent research, trials and expert advice, possibly financed by an obligatory contribution of the pharmaceutical industry. ” It also called the media to avoid “sensationalism and scaremongering in the public health domain”.

- **The functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan**

Ahead of the parliamentary elections in November 2010, the PACE called on the Azerbaijani authorities “to ensure the necessary conditions for the full compliance of the forthcoming elections with the European standards”. In line with the conclusions of the monitoring co-rapporteurs, Andres Herkel (Estonia, EPP/CD) and Joseph Debono Grech (Malta, SOC), it encouraged the authorities to co-operate with the Venice Commission in order to continue with the revision of the electoral code and to “generate conditions for a fair electoral campaign” by fully implementing the law on the freedom of assembly and by ensuring the freedom of the media.

In this context, the PACE called on the Azerbaijani authorities “to pass on a clear message, at the highest political level, that electoral fraud will not be tolerated” and urged all political parties to take part in the forthcoming elections. The Assembly stressed that these elections were all the more important given that “it was necessary to reinforce the application of the constitutionally-guaranteed principle of the separation of powers” and, especially, to strengthen the parliament’s role vis-à-vis the executive.

Lastly, with regard to the media situation, the Assembly condemned the arrests, intimidation, harassment, and physical threats of journalists, reiterated its position that defamation should be decriminalised and called on the authorities to release Eynulla Fatullayev as ordered by the European Court of Human Rights.

- **Prohibiting the marketing and use of the Mosquito youth dispersal device**

The PACE has called for a ban on all acoustic devices which discriminate against young people, such as the Mosquito “youth dispersal” device which emits a powerful sound signal audible to almost everybody under 20, but few over 25, in order to prevent young people from loitering.

In a recommendation unanimously adopted, based on a report by Piotr Wach (Poland, EPP/CD), the Assembly – which brings together parliamentarians from the 47 member states of the Council of Europe – said the “highly offensive” device discriminates against young people, treating them as if they are “unwanted birds or pests”.

It could also breach human rights, such as the rights to private life or freedom of assembly, the parliamentarians said, and may constitute degrading treatment because it inflicts “acoustic pain”.

It is thought around 3,500 of the Mosquito devices are in use in the United Kingdom, though it is also used or marketed in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The Assembly called on governments, parliaments and local authorities to ban the device, and others like it, in public places. Marketing or selling it for private use should also be prohibited – or at least its use on private premises should be accompanied by clear warnings.

In its recommendation, the Assembly also called for the promotion, in consultation with youth forums at the local level, of more indoor and outdoor physical, intellectual and leisure recreation facilities for young people.

- **Combating sexist stereotypes in the media**

In an adopted resolution, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends a series of measures designed to combat sexist stereotypes in the media. It invites in particular the member states to set up regulatory and self-regulatory media authorities to reduce gender-based discrimination and to devise codes of good practice with partners in the profession to promote the balanced presence of women and men in the media.

At the same time, the Assembly encourages national parliaments to adopt legal measures to penalize sexist remarks or insults. However, as the rapporteur on this issue, Doris Stump (Switzerland, SOC), points out, media education also needs to be provided from an early age to teach young people how to decode images and messages.

- **Decent pensions for women**

Many elderly women are poor because they have no pension or their pension is insufficient, PACE warned PACE during a debate related to pensions for women. Also, traditional pension systems favour the linear career paths of men and are disconnected from the realities of present-day society. Following the proposals by Anna Curdová (Czech Republic, SOC), the Assembly called for “fair and equitable pensions offering every man and woman a reasonable standard of living”. The adopted text urges European states to guarantee a personal pension entitlement and to revise their pension laws in order not only to prohibit discrimination between women and men but also to provide for “positive discrimination in favour of women”.

- **Forests: the future of our planet**

PACE called for a series of measures to protect the world’s forests in both member and non-member states especially considering how illegal logging has led to mass deforestation in developing countries. These measures include establishing more effective monitoring mechanisms and drawing up binding international agreements to limit deforestation, and proposing the development of sustainable forest management techniques.

In the adopted text based on the report by Vyacheslav Timchenko (Russia, EDG) Parliamentarians also took note of the urgent need to prevent or limit the damage by forest fires by improving forest-fire-fighting technologies, launching awareness-raising campaigns about forest fire prevention, and introducing criminal sanctions for pyromaniacs.

The Assembly also hosted an emergency debate on the Flare-up of tension in the Middle East

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) called on Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza “without prejudice to its own security”.

In a resolution adopted by a large majority following an urgent debate, the Assembly welcomed the announcement of a partial easing of the blockade as a “first step”, but said there should be access by land and sea to allow in the goods necessary for “normal living conditions” and to permit economic development.

Presenting the report to the Assembly, Piero Fassino (Italy, SOC) said lifting the blockade was “essential” to defuse tension and pave the way to a resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Assembly – which brings together parliamentarians from the 47 Council of Europe member states – also said Israel’s attack on the Gaza aid flotilla was “manifestly disproportionate” and a breach of international law.

It called on Israel to co-operate fully with the international community to ensure a “prompt, international, impartial and transparent enquiry” into what happened.

The Assembly also said it appreciated the intensive efforts made by President Obama and his Special Envoy for the Middle East George Mitchell, and

expressed its full support for the "proximity talks", urging the parties to co-operate with them fully for a positive outcome.

PACE regularly brings together members of the Israeli Knesset, which holds observer status with the Assembly, and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council to try and build confidence;

and a Current affairs debate on the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

It also heard from several European political leaders and other guest speakers:

- Mr. Mevlüt ÇAVUSOĞLU, President of PACE
- Mr Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, President of the Republic of Ingushetia (Russian Federation)
- Mr Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro
- Ms Fanny Ardant, patron of the Council of Europe Dosta! Campaign
- Mr Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations
- Mr Alain Touraine, Sociologist
- Mr Gjorgje Ivanov, President of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

B. Canadian activities during the session

Senator Mitchell and Mrs Lalonde attended the meetings of their respective political groups as well as the meetings of several Committees, namely, the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, the Political Affairs Committee, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs.

The delegation was also briefed by Ambassador De Lorimier, the Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe and his Deputy, Mr. Francois Larochelle. Topics discussed were the situation in Belgium and its upcoming position at the head of the Council of Minister of the European Union, possible campaign against the oil sands in Europe, an overview of the functioning of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

C. Background: The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organization that 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, organized 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 201 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. The Council's main institutions are the Committee of Ministers (the Council's 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 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 OECD, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Organization for Migration. This wide-ranging role in international policy-making and in the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights makes the Council and Assembly an important venue for pursuing and advancing Canada's multilateral and bilateral engagement in Europe. 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).

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Grant Mitchell, Senator
Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and at the Third Part of the 2010 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
DESTINATION	Paris, Strasbourg, France
DATES	June 18 to 26, 2010
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. Grant Mitchell, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mrs. Francine Lalonde, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Philippe Méla, Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 16,516.00
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,467.62
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,900.60
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 3.85
TOTAL	\$ 22,888.07