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Parliamentary Association



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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation in a parliamentary mission
to the Republic of Lithuania, the country that will next hold
the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union
and to the European Parliament**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Vilnius, Lithuania and Brussels, Belgium
April 3-9, 2013**

Report

Introduction

From 3 to 6 April 2013, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of seven parliamentarians to Vilnius, Lithuania, the country that will next hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Mr. David Tilson, Member of Parliament (M.P.) was the Head of Delegation, which also included the Honourable Senator Michel Rivard; Mr. Corneliu Chisu, M.P.; Mr. Sean Casey, M.P.; Mr. Mathieu Ravignat, M.P.; the Honourable Senator Joan Fraser; Mr. Merv Tweed, M.P. and Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet, M.P. The delegation was also joined in Vilnius by members of the Canada-Nordic-Baltic Parliamentary Friendship Group, including Mr. Garry Breitkreuz, M.P.; Mr. Bruce Hyer, M.P.; Mr. James Lunney, M.P.; Mr. Terence Young, M.P.; and Mr. Russ Hiebert. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary Mr. Maxime Ricard and Advisor Ms. Karin Phillips. While in Vilnius, the delegation was hosted by His Excellency John Morrison, Ambassador of Canada to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Mr. Kevin Hamilton, Chargé d'affaires, Office of the Embassy in Vilnius, who also accompanied the delegation to its meetings.

The delegation then travelled to Brussels, Belgium to participate in meetings with the European Parliament from 7 to 9 April 2013, where they were joined by Mr. Barry Devolin, M.P., also a member of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association. In Brussels, the delegation was hosted by His Excellency David Plunkett, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union, who attended meetings with the delegation along with representatives from Canada's Mission to the European Union, including Mr. Alain Hausser, Deputy Head of Mission; Ms. Catherine Dickson, Counsellor for Trade, Investment and Science and Technology; Ms. Lorraine Diguier, Counsellor Foreign Policy, Diplomacy and Public Affairs; Ms. Unati Vasavada, Counsellor for Immigration; Mr. Christian Halle, First Secretary for Commercial Affairs; and Ms. Nichola Payne, Second Secretary, Political and Parliamentary Affairs.

While in Belgium, the delegation also participated in activities aimed at fostering Canada-Belgian relations, which were hosted by Mr. Denis Robert, Ambassador of Canada to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Mr. Peter Ivanschky, an official from Canada's Embassy to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The delegation was given a tour of the Belgian Federal Parliament in Brussels by Senator Louis Siquet, a member of the Belgium-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group. The delegation then travelled to Ypres to meet with additional members of the Belgium-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group, including Senator Cindy Franssen, the President and Senator Jan Durnez, Mayor of Ypres. Senator Durnez hosted a reception at the City Hall of Ypres and Senator Franssen hosted a working dinner for the delegation. While in Ypres, the delegation also had the honour of participating in the "Last Post" ceremony at the Menin Gate, a ceremony in which the traditional final salute to the fallen is played in honour of the memory of the soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient during the First World War. During the course of the ceremony, Mr. Tilson, M.P., Senator Joan Fraser and Mr. Mathieu Ravignat, M.P. laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament of Canada in honour of the fallen soldiers.

Prior to departure, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Natural Resources Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It also held a working lunch with His Excellency Vytautas Žalys, Ambassador of Lithuania to Canada; His Excellency Bruno van der Pluijm, Ambassador of Belgium to Canada; and Mr. Maurizio Cellinie, Head of the Economic Commercial and Trade Section from the European Union's Delegation to Canada.

This report provides an overview of the delegation's participation in meetings related to Lithuania's upcoming term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union, as well as meetings in Brussels with the European Union related to the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the European Commission's proposed measures for the implementation of the Fuel Quality Directive.

Parliamentary mission to Lithuania, the country to hold the next rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation to Vilnius, Lithuania from 3-6 April 2013 because it is the next country to hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The Republic of Lithuania's six-month term as rotating President begins in July 2013 and will be carried out as part of an 18-month program that has been developed in conjunction with two other EU member states: Ireland and Greece. The purpose of this mission was for Canadian parliamentarians to learn about Lithuania's priorities for its term as President of the Council of the EU. The mission also provided Canadian parliamentarians with the opportunity to advance Canadian positions on key EU-related issues, learn about policy debates and developments within the EU more generally, as well as promote bilateral relations. During the course of the visit, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with Lithuanian government officials, parliamentarians, local think tanks, academics, as well as business and labour groups. Background information on the EU and the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU and a summary of these meetings are provided in the sections below.

Background Information on the Rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union made up of 27 Member States: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. In addition to its member states, the EU also consists of institutions that are responsible for the development, adoption, coordination, implementation and judicial review of EU legislation, policies and programs in a broad range of areas. The EU's key decision-making bodies are outlined in the table below.

Table 1 – Description of the EU’s Main Decision-making Bodies

Institution	Description	Powers
European Parliament	The European Parliament is made up of 736 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). They are directly elected every five years to represent interests of the people of Europe. They do not sit in national blocks, but in Europe-wide political groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament has the power to adopt, amend or reject legislation proposed by the European Commission; it shares this power with the Council of the European Union. • Ratifies international treaties negotiated by the European Commission, including trade agreements. • Exercises oversight over the European Commission; may dismiss the Commission. • Parliament shares joint authority with the Council of the European Union for approving the EU’s annual budget.
The Council of the European Union	The Council of the European Union is one of the main decision-making bodies in the EU. It is made up of 27 national government ministers representing each of the EU Member States in a broad range of policy areas, including foreign and security policy, economic and financial affairs, social policy and health, transport, the environment, agriculture, fisheries, education, justice and home affairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the approval of the EU’s budget and the development of legislation in a broad range of policy areas. • It shares its legislative and budgetary authority with the European Parliament.
European Council	The European Council is made up of 27 heads of state and governments of EU Member States and the President of the European Commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It gives the EU its political direction and sets out its main priorities.
European Commission	The European Commission is the executive organ, which represents and upholds the interests of the EU as a whole. The Commission consists of 27 men and women appointed from each respective Member State. They are assisted by 24,000 civil servants. The President of the Commission is chosen by EU Member States and is endorsed by the European Parliament.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafts proposals for new legislation, which it presents to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. • Enforces EU treaties and laws. • Manages the day-to-day implementation of EU policies and spending of EU funds.

Source: Information provided in the table was adapted by the author from European Union, *Panorama of the European Union*, http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/eu_glance/79/en.pdf.

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union rotates every six months among EU Member States. The rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union follows a trio formula whereby three EU Member States develop a common 18-month program that sets out the policy agenda for the European Union in a broad range of policy areas, except for foreign and security policy. These areas include economic and financial affairs, social policy and health, transport, the environment, agriculture, fisheries, education, justice and home affairs. This program is carried out by each trio member for a six month period. During the course of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Member State is responsible for chairing the different working groups of the Council; finding consensus between the different Member States; and formulating proposals for compromises to be made among different Member States.¹ In addition, the Presidency country also plays an important role in negotiating with other EU institutions with legislative authority, such as the European Parliament.

As result of the entry into force of the *Treaty of Lisbon*² in December 2009, the Council of the European Union's Council of Foreign Ministers, which is made up of the Foreign Ministers of the EU Member States and is responsible for developing the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, will no longer be chaired by the rotating Presidency country. Instead, the Treaty established a new appointed position, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, to chair the Council of Foreign Ministers and represent the EU in international affairs.³ The High Representative is also the Vice President of the European Commission and participates in the work of the European Council.⁴ The current EU High Representative is Catherine Ashton. The overall aim of these changes was to ensure consistency and coherence in the EU's external activities.

Additionally, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union is no longer responsible for chairing the European Council, which is responsible for establishing the EU's overall general political direction and priorities. Under the *Treaty of Lisbon*, a new position of President was created to chair the European Council.⁵ The President of the European Council is elected by the Members of the European Council for a renewable

¹ Government of Poland, "[The main tasks of the Presidency.](#)"

² On 19 October 2007, the 27 EU Member State governments concluded the *Treaty of Lisbon*, a treaty that amends the two foundational treaties of the European Union, *The Treaty Establishing the European Community* and the *Treaty on the European Union*. The *Lisbon Treaty* introduces a number of institutional reformed aimed at streamlining the EU decision-making process, enhancing democratic accountability, strengthening EU institutions and giving the EU a stronger presence in international affairs. It came into force in December 2009, after it had been ratified by all 27 EU Member States. European Union, "Lisbon Treaty at a Glance," http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/glance/index_en.htm.

³ General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, "Treaty of Lisbon," *Information Note*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/111652.pdf.

⁴ The European Commission is the EU's administrative body responsible for policy development and implementation, as well as safeguarding the foundational treaties of the European Union. The European Commission, "About the European Commission," http://ec.europa.eu/about/index_en.htm.

⁵ General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, "Treaty of Lisbon," *Information Note*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/111652.pdf.

term of two and a half years. The current President of the European Council is Mr. Herman van Rompuy from Belgium.

Program and Summary of Discussions

Dinner Briefing with Mr. John Morrison, Ambassador of Canada to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Mr. Kevin Hamilton, Chargé d'affaires, Office of the Embassy in Vilnius

His Excellency Mr. John Morrison, Ambassador of Canada to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania began the briefing by providing the delegation with an overview of the differences between the three Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Beginning with Lithuania, the Ambassador highlighted the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Empire. He also explained how Lithuania's geographical position between Russia and Poland continues to shape the country's foreign and domestic policy. Meanwhile, over the centuries, Latvia had been dominated by many different peoples, including Russians and Germans, who had established a seigneurial system in the region. The country continues to have large German and Russian-speaking minorities. Estonia, on the other hand, had a Russian aristocracy and has closer ties to Scandinavia. In particular, the Estonian language is related to the Finnish language. The Ambassador explained that the three countries are linked as they all declared their independence at the end of World War I at the same time and then experienced both Nazi and Soviet invasions.

The Ambassador then outlined how the Baltic States had responded to the economic and financial crisis of the present day. He explained that they had all pursued austerity measures, including reigning in expenditures. Currently, the countries are experiencing higher rates of growth than elsewhere in the European Union, which is being driven, in part, by export growth. Consequently, the Baltics are seen as an example for the rest of Europe, though economists are debating to what extent Baltic economic growth is a result of economic convergence versus specific policy measures, as these countries were some of the poorest countries in Europe. The Ambassador explained that Canada has several strategic interests in the region, including the fact that the region marks NATO's most Eastern front; Canada has a large Baltic diaspora of almost 80,000 people; the on-going trade negotiations with the EU; common interests in relation to cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe such as Ukraine and Belarus; and finally, investment interests of Canadian companies, including Bombardier and Couche-Tard.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton, Chargé d'affaires, Office of the Canadian Embassy in Vilnius, continued the briefing by outlining the value of the delegation's visit. He explained that a visit by Canadian parliamentarians was particularly important because of the value that Lithuanians place on their parliament (the Seimas). Lithuanians highly value the Seimas because it played an important role in their history. Mr. Hamilton explained that the Seimas had played a key role in the reassertion of Lithuanian independence in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union, as its independence was achieved through an act of the Seimas. Moreover, Lithuanians had demonstrated their resistance to Soviet rule by preventing a siege of their parliament in 1991. Mr. Hamilton then turned to the country's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The delegation

learned that the EU's Eastern Partnership⁶ is one of the main priorities and in particular, the signing of an Association Agreement with Ukraine, which would allow for free trade between Ukraine and the EU in exchange for progress in areas such as human rights, the rule of law and the treatment of political prisoners. EU border security is also a priority for Lithuania. The EU's Baltic Sea Strategy, a strategy aimed at promoting economic and environmental cooperation between Baltic and Nordic states, was also identified as a priority as the Baltic States are increasingly trying to identify themselves with Nordic Scandinavian states, rather than the post-communist states of Eastern Central Europe. Finally, Lithuania is also prioritizing the issue of energy security to reduce the EU's and its own energy dependence on Russia. Alternative energy sources are currently being explored in the country, including the possible construction of a new nuclear plant; pipelines under the Baltic Sea; and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant. Mr. Hamilton also outlined some of the challenges Lithuania is facing with respect to its neighbours, in particular Belarus and Russia. One of the main challenges with respect to Belarus is the fact that Lithuania is host to a large Belorussian expat community, including political dissidents, which it has to balance with its strong economic ties to the country. Meanwhile, Lithuania has security concerns with respect to Russia, as Russian aircraft leaving from Kaliningrad, a Russian oblast on Lithuania's borders, frequently violate the country's airspace. The briefing concluded with delegates raising questions in relation to the legacy of the Soviet area in the Baltic region; visa arrangements between Kaliningrad and the EU; the economic underpinnings of the Lithuania's economy; as well as Lithuania's ability to exert influence in Ukraine.

Briefing by Mr. Rolandas Krišūnas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and other government officials from Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Rolandas Krišūnas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided the delegation with a briefing on the Government of Lithuania's priorities for its term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union. According to Mr. Krišūnas, the Presidency would offer Lithuania the chance to gain a deeper understanding of the EU, as well as increase its capacity to participate in the EU decision-making process. He noted that in addition to the country's specific priorities, there would be several issues dictating the Presidency agenda, including the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, which would require ensuring that the legislative agenda would be complete by that date, as well as responding to the European Parliament's concerns regarding the EU's budget, known as the "Multi-Annual Framework Agreement." Mr. Krišūnas outlined three main priorities for Lithuania's Presidency. The first is the notion of a "Credible Europe," which would focus on establishing stability within the Eurozone by implementing existing measures, including the European Stability Mechanism, steps towards a banking union, and coordination

⁶ The EU's Eastern Partnership is a partnership between the EU and countries in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) that focuses on the development of new association agreements with those countries, which in turn would allow for free trade, lead to visa liberalization, provide mechanisms for addressing illegal migration and provide for economic and social development of the region. The European Union External Action Service, "Eastern Partnership," http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm

and supervision of budgetary policy through the “European Semester” Process. The second priority is that of a “Growing Europe,” which would focus on developing an open economy by promoting liberalization through the Single Market Act, addressing youth unemployment, supporting pan-European projects that connect Europe in the areas of energy and transport. Finally, the third priority is that of an “Open Europe,” which emphasises a European Union that is open to new member states, such as Croatia, Turkey and Iceland. Mr. Krišūnas explained that signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine would be a key priority in this area and could mark a “deliverable” for the country’s term as EU President. However, he noted that there were risks, as Russia is also proposing that Ukraine join its Eurasian Customs Union that includes Belarus and Kazakhstan. Mr. Krišūnas also explained that the theme of openness also refers to trade, including the European Union’s recent efforts to begin trade negotiations with the United States and Japan.

The discussion then opened up to questions from the delegation, which focused on the challenges that Lithuania is facing in terms of energy security and the role of the EU in supporting projects in this area, such as the Baltic undersea pipeline. Mr. Krišūnas indicated that the EU has a role to play both in supporting energy security projects, as well as sitting at the table with EU member states when they face conflicts with energy suppliers. The delegation was also interested in learning about whether the Eastern Partnership would be focusing on addressing frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe, including the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The delegation inquired into the challenges facing the EU, including the divisions between northern and southern member states in addressing the financial crisis and whether these challenges could be overcome. According to Mr. Krišūnas, the EU has chosen a path towards deeper integration and would come out stronger from the financial crisis. Finally, the delegation was interested in hearing about Mr. Krišūnas’ views regarding progress toward the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. He noted that as far as the negotiations were concerned, he was under the impression that the “ball remained in Canada’s court” for the moment.

Working Lunch with Dr. Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University

The working lunch began with Dr. Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, the Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University, providing the delegation with his views on Lithuania’s priorities for its term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union. Dr. Vilpišauskas explained that since its independence in 1991, Lithuania’s foreign policy has focused on joining the European Union and NATO as a strategy to deal with its relations with its neighbouring countries. Lithuania’s EU Presidency priorities continue to reflect these concerns, as evidenced by the focus on the Eastern Partnership. According to Dr. Vilpišauskas, Lithuania is using its position within the EU to advance its relations with Eastern European countries, in particular Ukraine with the possibility of the EU signing an Association Agreement with the country. With respect to the country’s focus on energy security as a Presidency priority, Dr. Vilpišauskas noted that there were risks associated with this focus due to domestic politics. He further explained that there had been little progress domestically in developing an energy security strategy with each coalition government having different

views on how to achieve the country's objectives. It remains unclear what the current coalition government's proposals in this area would be. He said that one of the biggest challenges facing the Lithuania's term as EU President would be ensuring that domestic interests could be matched with EU priorities. He said that there would be similar challenges in the area of economic policy, as Lithuania is currently debating the adoption of the Euro. On the one hand, joining the Eurozone is seen as a means of promoting the country's deeper integration with the EU. However, Lithuanians are also reluctant to join the Eurozone because it would mean contributing funds to the European Stability Mechanism, which provides funds to other EU member states.

The delegation inquired about Dr. Vilpišauskas' views on Lithuania's relations with Russia, Poland and Ukraine. Dr. Vilpišauskas articulated that Lithuania's relations with Russia had been strained by Russia's closing of gas pipelines to the country in 2006 and differing interpretations of history regarding the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. Dr. Vilpišauskas also explained that relations with Poland are complicated due in part to changes in Polish foreign policy. According to Dr. Vilpišauskas, Poland is shifting away from its Euro-sceptical stance towards deeper engagement with the EU at the expense of its relations with Lithuania. He further noted that relations are also strained as a result of Lithuania's treatment of its Polish minority, including a law that prevents the proper spelling of Polish last names. As a result of the strains in Polish-Lithuania relations, Lithuania is now turning towards the Nordic states for closer relations. With respect to Ukraine, Dr. Vilpišauskas explained that there is geopolitical competition between Russia and the EU over Ukraine. However, he said that Lithuania's main challenge is the fact that there are also different views within the EU over drawing Ukraine closer to Europe with an Association Agreement.

Briefing by Ms. Loreta Raulinaityte, Seimas Chief Coordinator for EU Presidency Preparation

The delegation received a briefing by Ms. Loreta Raulinaityte, Chief Coordinator for EU Presidency Preparation for the Seimas about the role of the Seimas during Lithuania's term as rotating President of the Council of the EU. Ms. Raulinaityte provided the delegation with an overview of all the parliamentary events associated with the EU Presidency term, including the budget and staff required to fulfil these obligations. She explained to the delegation that the role of the national parliaments in the EU rotating Presidency has increased as a result of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, which strengthened the powers of national parliaments by providing them with oversight of EU legislation. In addition, the delegation learned that the Seimas had also played an active role in developing the country's presidency priorities, passing a resolution on 10 November 2011, outlining four key priority areas: energy security; protection of external borders of the EU; the EU's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region; and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy. She further explained that these priorities had been translated into three major directions currently being pursued by the coalition government: Credible Europe, Growing Europe and Open Europe. She also explained the different types of inter-parliamentary meetings that would occur during the Presidency, including a Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments; meetings of Chairs of different parliamentary committees; as well as parliamentary conferences on specific topics. Some of the themes for these parliamentary meetings include reform of the Common

Agricultural Policy; the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy; the preservation of languages and cultures within the EU; and human trafficking.

Meeting with Mr. Laurynas Kasciunas, Director of Research and Analysis and Staff from the Eastern Europe Studies Centre

The delegation met with Mr. Laurynas Kasciunas, Director of Research and Analysis and staff from the Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC), a non-governmental, non-profit organization that aims to build civil society and promote democracy in Eastern Europe by monitoring and researching political, economic and social developments in the region, and by developing qualitative analyses of these developments.⁷ The staff at the Centre explained that the Centre is both a “think tank” and a “do tank,” focussing on both research and on-the-ground democracy-building activities. The Centre’s overall goal is to ensure that the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy is a success story. The delegation learned about EESC’s activities in Belarus, which consist of building civil society by promoting gender quality; developing networks of Belarusian students studying abroad; working with professional trade unions as possible agents of change; and working with academics and researchers to develop alternative visions for the country. The staff of the EESC explained that its activities in Ukraine focus on democratic reform and election observation. They noted that they were appreciative of the 500 election observers Canada had sent to Ukraine for the last elections. The staff explained that the situation in Eastern European countries is strongly influenced by Russia. According to staff, Russian foreign policy in the region is conducted by controlling oil and gas prices. Ukraine is currently considering either joining a Eurasian Customs Union with Russia, or an Association Agreement with the EU. The staff at the Centre believed that there is sufficient deadlock both within the EU and within Ukraine itself to prevent further progress at the diplomatic level. However, they noted that if Ukraine joined Russia’s customs union, the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy could be considered a failure. According to the staff, Belarus remains firmly in Russian hands. The delegation asked the staff about the role of the Belarusian minority in Lithuania in exerting influence in Belarus, including the development of civil society. The members also inquired into EESC’s specific programs aimed at engaging women and unions in the country. The staff of the Centre explained that its work focuses on providing expertise in drafting laws on equal rights and violence against women, as well as promoting debates among experts on these issues.

Courtesy Meeting with Mr. Vydas Gedvilas, Speaker of the Seimas

After some introductory remarks, Mr. Gedvilas provided the delegation with an overview of the political situation in Lithuania. He explained that there are seven parties in parliament with four parties making up the current coalition government, which had been in power for 100 days. He explained that both the government and opposition are united in the area of foreign policy, but there remain divisions on domestic policy issues. Mr. Gedvilas explained that NATO remains a cornerstone of Lithuania’s foreign policy. Energy security is also a key priority, as it serves as the basis of the country’s independence from Russia. However, Mr. Gedvilas explained that divisions remain about the best approach to achieve energy security in the country, whether the focus should

⁷ Eastern Europe Study Centre, “About EESC,” http://www.eesc.lt/en/about_eesc/About

be on nuclear energy, shale oil and gas or other sources. He noted that debates are currently underway in terms of developing a strategy in this area. The delegation asked about the Speaker's views regarding the fragility of democracy in Eastern Europe, the role energy security plays in the region, and how Lithuania intended to address this issue during its term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union. Mr. Gevilas explained that the Speakers of the Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Parliaments had engaged in trilateral discussions regarding the steps Ukraine needed to take to sign an Association Agreement with the EU.

Meetings with the Chair and Members of the Seimas European Affairs Committee

The delegation met Mr. Benediktas Juodka, Chair of the European Affairs Committee at the Seimas, as well as other members of the Committee. The meeting was led by Petras Austrevicius, the Vice-President of the Seimas, who provided the delegation with an overview of the role and functioning of the European Affairs Committee. Mr. Austrevicius explained that this parliamentary committee is responsible for scrutinizing EU legislation, as well as approving the Government's EU agenda. The committee meets twice a week and examines over five hundred legislative issues per year. Mr. Austrevicius then went over the main priorities for Lithuania's EU Presidency. He explained that Lithuania hoped to be a mediator between the different interests of EU Member States in Eastern Europe through the Eastern Partnership. Mr. Austrevicius also spoke about current debates about Lithuania joining the Eurozone, as well as the challenges facing European integration more generally. He indicated that the majority of the political elite in Europe recognize the need for deeper integration, but he also felt that there is a need for a systematic and pragmatic approach rather than one based upon idealism, or the notion of a common European identity. The discussion then focused on the importance of European integration in light of Lithuania's experience of being occupied by the Soviet Union, as well as the need to extend democracy to other countries such as Belarus.

The delegation raised the issue of negotiations towards a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), a legally binding political agreement that outlines the scope of Canada-EU bilateral co-operation in a broad range of areas, such as international peace and security, terrorism, human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and sustainable development.⁸ They noted that one of the current challenges in the SPA negotiations was the EU proposal that the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) would be suspended if there was a gross violation of human rights. However, the delegation explained that the Canadian government was opposed to this measure because it could be abused for possible political or economic gain. The delegation further requested that members of the European Affairs Committee consider the Canadian proposal for alternate dispute resolution process, which would not result in the suspension of CETA.

⁸ DFAIT, "Canada-EU Relations," Brief Submitted to the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, October, 2012.

Meeting with Chairman and Members of the Interparliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Canada

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet with the Interparliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Canada, which is chaired by Mr. Donatas Jankauskas. After opening remarks and greetings, Mr. Jankauskas began the discussion with an overview of areas of cooperation between Canada and Lithuania, including youth exchange and mobility agreements, research and development, cooperation in NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as current negotiations towards the CETA. The delegation made reference to the challenges in Lithuania with regards to energy security and inquired whether this would be an area of possible cooperation. In particular, the delegation raised the possibility of cooperating in the area of biotechnology and nuclear energy. Members of the Interparliamentary Friendship Group were interested in learning about Canadian nuclear reactors, as well as Canadian experiences with respect to the use of nuclear energy and the storage of nuclear waste. The delegation also asked members of the Interparliamentary Friendship Group about the role of immigration in addressing population decline in Lithuania. Members indicated that Lithuania is trying to find a balance between “re-immigration” of Lithuanian expatriates and attracting immigrants from abroad.

Meeting with Mr. Gediminas Rainys, Vice-President, and Staff of the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists

The delegation met with the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, which is a voluntary membership organization representing the interests of different industries in Lithuania, including manufacturing, trades, banking and scientific training and research. The meeting began with an overview of the Lithuanian manufacturing sector, current economic trends and their possible impact on the Lithuanian economy, which was provided by Mr. Aleksandr Izgorodin. Mr. Izgorodin explained that 62% of Lithuania’s exports are to the EU, while the remaining 38% are to countries in Eastern Europe, including the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan; and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Despite some political challenges with these states, trade with Eastern European countries and members of the CIS is facilitated by the fact that they are all able to communicate in Russian. The delegation learned that the Lithuanian economy remains dependent upon manufacturing and exports in food, chemicals, wood, textiles and metals. According to Mr. Izgorodin, export demand is currently being driven by Russia, which is stimulating its economy by expanding credit to consumers, as well as the high rates of economic growth currently occurring in CIS countries. However, the delegation learned that despite high rates of economic growth in Lithuania industry profits in Lithuania are declining, because the price of inputs, including labour, continue to rise. Manufacturers have maintained their price levels despite the increase in input costs by reducing their profit margins.

According to Mr. Izgorodin, other risks facing the Lithuanian economy include high rates of structural unemployment due to a misalignment between labour demand and the shortage of Lithuanian workers with appropriate skill sets; the on-going financial crisis in the Eurozone; and the potential decline in Russian demand as stimulus spending

declines. The delegation asked about the impact of the entry of Lithuania into the Eurozone, as well as efforts to address the shortages of skilled labour in the country. From Mr. Izgorodin's perspective, Lithuania's entry into the Eurozone would have both positive and negative effects. From a business perspective, it would reduce transaction costs, but there is concern over the necessity to contribute state funds to stabilize EU member states in southern Europe. With respect to shortages of skilled labour, Mr. Izgorodin explained that there is a need to focus on skills training strategies, as well as attracting skilled workers to the country.

Working Lunch with Professor Kestutis Girnius, Political Analyst and Journalist

Professor Kestutis Girnius began the working lunch by providing the delegation with an overview of the domestic political situation, explaining that the current coalition government that was elected in the fall of 2012 was the least active government because of corruption scandals facing the Labour Party, one of the lead parties in the coalition. According to Professor Girnius, one of the key policy challenges facing Lithuania today is the need to address inequities but there was an unwillingness to consider progressive taxation. Professor Girnius explained that another key policy challenge facing Lithuania was energy security. The rejection of the proposed nuclear plant in a referendum held in the fall had meant that the coalition government is now focusing on improving relations with Russia to secure its energy supplies. The delegation asked Professor Girnius about the role that the EU could play in reducing Lithuania's dependence on Russia for oil and gas. The professor explained that EU funding is necessary to change the energy grid system, which is still tied to the Russian system. EU funding is also necessary to provide support for Lithuania's Liquefied Natural Gas terminal. The delegation also asked for Professor Girnius' views on the crisis in the Eurozone. He indicated that the crisis had revealed the lack of unity within the European Union and in particular, the lack of a common European identity, which is evidenced by the divisions between Southern and Northern Europe. The delegation was also interested in Professor Girnius' views on addressing income equality in Lithuania, including elaborating on the issue of progressive taxation. Professor Girnius explained that Lithuania lacks an income tax system like that of Canada or the United States that would allow for a greater redistribution of wealth in the country.

The discussion then turned towards foreign policy, particularly regarding Lithuania's relations with Poland. From Professor Girnius' perspective, Polish complaints around Lithuania's treatment of minorities are legitimate with respect to allowing Polish street signs in Polish communities, as well as the need for constitutional amendments to allow for the proper spelling of Polish last names. However, recent laws passed that required students to take compulsory exams in Lithuanian were seen by the Professor as necessary to promote the economic integration of Polish minorities and therefore, Professor Girnius did not feel that they were a discriminatory measure. With respect to other aspects of foreign policy, Professor Girnius explained that NATO remains the country's security guarantee and its real interests lay in its membership in EU, including maintaining good relations with Germany. He also explained that Lithuania is looking to Scandinavia for closer ties, but significant differences in values continue to exist between Baltic and Scandinavian countries.

Meeting with Mr. Arturas Cerniauskas, President of the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation

Mr. Arturas Cerniauskas began the meeting by giving an overview of the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, which is the biggest union in Lithuania, representing over 25 different professions at the national level. The Confederation is also responsible for representing the interests of these professions in a Tripartite Council, which includes unions, employers, and the government. Mr. Cerniauskas also explained that the union is a part of the EU Trade Union Confederation and cooperates with the Russian trade unions in addressing common challenges. The delegation asked about the legacy of the Soviet occupation and its impact on union formation, as unions had been linked historically to the regime. Mr. Cerniauskas explained that the transition was difficult and his organization is focusing on conveying the role that unions play in protecting workers. The delegation also had questions about union formation in Lithuania, including whether membership is compulsory, the percentage required to establish a union, and whether union leaders have to disclose their salaries. According to Mr. Cerniauskas, union formation is voluntary and agreement from 10% of employees is required in order to set up a union. Union leaders do not have to disclose their incomes but their organization had published general salary bands on their website. The discussion then focused on the right to strike in Lithuania.

Parliamentary Mission to the European Parliament

After participating in meetings related to Lithuania's upcoming term as rotating President of the Council of the European Union, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association's delegation travelled to Brussels, Belgium to hold meetings with the European Parliament as well as other institutions within the European Union to discuss key issues in Canada-EU relations, including the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA);⁹ the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA);¹⁰ and the EU's proposed measures to implement the Fuel Quality Directive. During the course of its visit, the delegation met with Members of the European Parliament, representatives from the European Commission, and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Canadian Mission to the European Union. A summary of these meetings is provided in the sections below.

⁹ In 2009, negotiations toward a Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) were launched between Canada and the EU. The CETA negotiations are comprehensive in scope, including areas such as: trade in goods, technical trade barriers, trade facilitation, customs procedures and rules of origin, trade in services, investment, central and sub-central government procurement, food safety and animal and plant health measures, regulatory co-operation, intellectual property, competition policy, dispute settlement and sustainable development.

¹⁰ The Strategic Partnership Agreement is a legally binding agreement that outlines Canada-EU cooperation in a broad range of areas, including: international peace and security; terrorism; the promotion of human rights; nuclear non-proliferation and sustainable development.

A. Program Elements and Summary of Discussions

Breakfast Briefing with His Excellency David Plunkett, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union and Mission Staff

Ambassador Plunkett began the briefing session with an overview of Canada-EU relations. He expected 2013 to be a historic year with the conclusion of both CETA and SPA negotiations. He also mentioned other transport security agreements that were in the process of being negotiated between the two sides, including a supply chain security agreement, which focuses on the inspection of containers at borders; and a Passenger Name Record Agreement, which relates to the sharing of information about airline passengers. In terms of bilateral irritants, the Ambassador noted Canada's visa requirements for the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania, and some of Canada's environmental policies (e.g., with respect to the oil sands, Genetically Modified Organisms, the seal hunt, and Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol). The briefing session then opened up to questions from the delegation, which was interested in finding out about the status of CETA negotiations. Ms. Catherine Dickson, Counsellor for Trade, Investment and Science and Technology, explained that negotiations were nearing the end, but some of the most critical issues in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, government procurement, and services and investment were still to be resolved. According to Ms. Dickson, one of the challenges of the trade agreement was its comprehensive approach.

The delegation then asked about how the SPA agreement came to be linked with CETA. Ms. Lorraine Diguier, Counsellor for Foreign Policy, Diplomacy and Public Affairs, explained that the EU had placed SPA on the table after Canada had agreed to negotiate a trade agreement with the EU and therefore, from a Canadian perspective, CETA and the SPA were mutually exclusive. However, the EU's model for Strategic Partnership Agreements with its trade partners calls for the suspension of trade agreements in the case of a gross violation of human rights, which is the model that the EU wants to apply to Canada. Ms. Diguier explained that the EU had made exceptions with other countries and therefore, Canada is also seeking alternatives to the current proposal. She further noted that the EU would face challenges negotiating a similar SPA with the United States in the context of their trade negotiations. The delegation was also interested in learning about officials' views on the ratification of both agreements by the European Parliament. Officials indicated that since European Parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place in May of 2014, ratification of CETA by the current European Parliament is unlikely during this parliamentary term because of the time it would take for the agreement to be translated in all EU languages, as well as undergo a full legal analysis.

The delegation was interested in hearing the views of officials regarding the EU's ability to address the challenges facing democracy in Eastern Europe in countries such as Ukraine and EU Member States, such as Hungary. Officials indicated that the EU had been successful in promoting democratic reform in states seeking association or membership agreements with the EU, but is facing more difficulties now that those states are members of the EU. However, the EU does have the option to suspend funding to Member States that were not adhering to the EU's democratic values. The delegation then asked about Canadian visa requirements for the Czech Republic,

Bulgaria and Romania and progress in this area. Ms. Unnati Vasavada Counsellor for Immigration explained that current visa requirements were a result of the high number of unfounded, withdrawn or abandoned asylum claims made by individuals from these countries. According to Ms. Vasavada, these numbers were currently declining as result of a combination of measures; consequently, Canada was going to review the situation.

Meeting with Mr. Adrian van der Hoven, Deputy Director General for Business Europe

The delegation met with Mr. Adrian van der Hoven, Deputy Director General for Business Europe, which is a federation that represents the interests of 41 business organizations from all EU Member States and Accession countries, including Turkey. Mr. van der Hoven provided an overview of the impact of the sovereign debt crisis in Europe and related on-going challenges, including high unemployment rates and fulfilling commitments to save the Eurozone. He noted that despite these challenges, the industrial sector in Europe remains quite strong. While industry supports banking reform within the EU, some of the measures currently being taken are seen as slowing down the movement of capital. In response to questions from the delegation, Mr. van der Hoven indicated that support for international trade is strong within the EU and is seen as a means of promoting economic growth. He also explained that it is necessary for the EU to invest more money in research and development, infrastructure and skills development to promote growth. With regards to CETA, Mr. van der Hoven indicated that he understood that Canada and the EU are close to reaching an agreement, but challenges remain in certain sectors, including pharmaceuticals and the harmonization of intellectual property regulations, public procurement, agriculture and investment protection. The delegation expressed concerns that negotiations would lose momentum now that the EU is beginning trade negotiations with the US and Japan. Mr. van der Hoven shared those concerns. He also noted that ratification by the European Parliament could be challenging as the new European Parliament that would be elected in spring of 2014 could be less pro-trade than the current one. The delegation inquired about Business Europe's views regarding the European Commission's approach on the Fuel Quality Directive (FQD).¹¹ Mr. van der Hoven was of the view that the European

¹¹ As part of its climate change and energy package, the European Union has agreed to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 20% by 2020. The Fuel Quality Directive is part of these efforts and focuses on GHG emissions in the transportation sector, requiring suppliers to reduce the GHGs associated with their entire fuel production chain, or life cycle by 6% by 2020. The Fuel Quality Directive establishes different intensity values for different fuel sources, referred to as "feedstocks," to reflect their overall greenhouse gas emissions over the life cycle, which can differ due to different amounts of energy required in their extraction and refining processes.¹¹ The European Commission is now considering the values it will assign to different fossil fuel sources, including conventional, coal-to-liquid, shale oil and natural bitumen (found in oil sands). Under the current proposal, natural bitumen, shale oil, coal-to-liquid, and gas-to-liquid, are all fossil fuels that are identified as having higher GHG emission rates over their life cycle than conventional crude oil due to their extraction and refinement methods.¹¹ In particular, natural bitumen has a proposed default value of 107.0 CO₂/mega joule, which is 22% higher than the proposed default value for conventional oil, 87.5 CO₂/mega joule. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *20 20 by 2020 – Europe's climate change opportunity*, 2008, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0030:FIN:EN:HTML> and http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/fuel/index_en.htm

Commission's approach to the FQD was not based on scientific evidence. Moreover, the measure would only increase costs and would represent a trade barrier without having significant impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Meeting with Mr. Philipp Dupuis, European Union's Deputy Chief Negotiator for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

Mr. Dupuis provided the delegation with an overview of the state of play of CETA negotiations. According to Mr. Dupuis, though negotiations are reaching their final stages, the sector issues that they are outstanding are more difficult to address because of differences in legal approaches and economic systems. Mr. Dupuis explained that challenges remain in agriculture, investment protection, and government procurement. The delegation asked about the ratification process for the agreement and the possible timeline. Mr. Dupuis said that first there would be a "legal scrub" of the agreement which could take five to six months. After the official initialling of the agreement by negotiators, it would be translated into 22 languages. The agreement would then be examined by all departments of the European Commission, who would then make a formal proposal that the agreement be sent to the European Council and the European Parliament for their consent. Mr. Dupuis indicated that this process could take up to two years and therefore, the agreement may not be ratified by the current parliament.

First Working Session with Members of the European Parliament on Canada-European Union Relations and the Strategic Partnership Agreement

The delegation held a working session with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to have an exchange of views on Canada-EU relations with a specific focus on the Strategic Partnership Agreement. The working session was chaired by Mr. Tilson, Head of the Delegation, and Mr. Philip Bradbourn, Chairman of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada. The session began with Mrs. Elizabeth Jeggle providing the delegation with her views on the Strategic Partnership Agreement. Mrs. Jeggle was appointed as a rapporteur¹² for the agreement by the European Parliament. Mrs. Jeggle explained that the SPA is an agreement that is being negotiated in parallel to CETA. According to Mrs. Jeggle, three rounds of formal negotiations have taken place since 2011. She further noted that there is a strong will on both sides to reach an agreement. She said that she would continue to follow the final stages of negotiations closely and try to obtain as much information as possible. She will make her position on the agreement clear to the European External Action Service, which is responsible for negotiating the agreement from the EU side. She further noted that each political group in the European Parliament had appointed a shadow rapporteur for the agreement. She concluded her statements by focusing on the dispute resolution clause that would result in the suspension of CETA if there was a gross violation of human rights by either party. She explained that this clause is fundamental to the values of the European Union. Moreover, the universal nature of human rights means that the EU is not in a position to make an exception for Canada in

¹² A rapporteur is an MEP that has been chosen to draft a report on a particular subject, legislative proposal or another document from the European Commission that has been assigned to a parliamentary committee for study.¹² The rapporteur's main task is to analyse the subject, consult with subject matter experts and key stakeholders, and recommend the political direction that the committee should take on the issue.

this area. To do so, would undermine the credibility of the European Union in the eyes of other countries.

The Canadian delegation responded by expressing its understanding of the EU's position with regards to human rights given their historical experiences. They also emphasized Canada's strong human rights record, including its role in the drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights. However, the delegation members also expressed their concern about the linkage of trade agreements and human rights clauses, because of Canada's experience with the dispute resolution mechanisms within the North American Free Trade Agreement, which they felt had been exploited many times particularly with respect to softwood lumber. The delegation explained that the EU would also have to make an exception with the United States in the context of their trade negotiations, as it would be even less likely that it would accept the EU's approach in this area. The delegation also stressed the importance of concluding CETA negotiations sooner rather than later and expressed the hope that CETA would not be held up by SPA negotiations. Delegation members further noted that it was not in the economic interests of either Canada or the EU to delay the conclusion of CETA negotiations. In response to the delegation's concerns, Mrs. Jeggel re-emphasized the importance of the commitment to human rights and how the SPA could be an example to the world in terms of balancing economic interests and human rights. From Mrs. Jeggel's perspective this would be especially relevant when engaging in trade negotiations with China in the future.

In addition to focusing on the SPA, MEPs raised the issue of Canada's visa requirements for the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria. The delegation explained the current measures that Canada was undertaking to address this issue, including the impact of the implementation of Bill C-31, *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act*.

Second Working Session with Members of the European Parliament on the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Financial Crisis in the European Union

The second working session with Members of the European Parliament on CETA and the financial crisis within the European Union was also chaired by Mr. Tilson and Mr. Bradbourn. The discussion began with MEPs expressing concern with the rise of "Euro-scepticism" in the United Kingdom, including the possibility of the United Kingdom leaving the EU. The MEPs noted that despite the perception in the United Kingdom that it would be able to pursue trade agreements with other Commonwealth countries, the United Kingdom had in actuality less economic influence than it has had in the past with Commonwealth countries such as India. Consequently, they reasoned that remaining within the EU is in the United Kingdom's best interests from an economic perspective. They felt that the swift conclusion of CETA negotiations would demonstrate to the United Kingdom that its on-going trade and economic interests lay in EU membership. Mr. Peter Stastny, the European Parliament's rapporteur on CETA expressed his frustration at the slow pace of the negotiations. He said that the majority of the European Parliament was on-side and there was danger in waiting for after the 2014 parliamentary elections to ratify the agreement. He also said that delays in negotiations are not a good signal to send in challenging economic times. The delay would only strengthen the voices of those who oppose the agreement. He stressed that now is the

time for political leadership. One MEP raised her concerns about investor-state dispute mechanisms in the agreement.

The Canadian delegation raised its concerns about the long ratification process of CETA within the EU. It also expressed concern that although negotiations are in their concluding phase, little progress had been made in the key issues, particularly in agriculture. They also noted that there seems to be differing views within the EU with regards to agricultural policy and they wondered about the implications of these differences for the future of the agreement. The Canadian delegation also agreed that it was time that the politicians move the agreement forward. With respect to investor-state dispute mechanisms in CETA, Canadian delegates indicated that the mechanisms are subject to much debate in Canada, but noted that such mechanisms are there in part to protect Canadian standards.

The discussion then focused on the sovereign debt crisis within the EU. Mr. Wolf Klinz presented his views on the subject, explaining that the EU is trying to do two things at once: consolidate public funds and stimulate growth. However, he explained that there is no real consensus within the EU regarding how to stimulate growth, whether to focus on addressing labour market challenges or reducing inefficiencies within bureaucracies.

Meeting with Mr. Peter Vis, Head of Cabinet for the European Commission's Directorate General for Climate Action

Mr. Tilson began the meeting with Mr. Vis by presenting the Government of Canada's position on the EU's Fuel Quality Directive (FQD), including the main concern that the FQD is unfairly stigmatizing Canadian crude oil by treating other crude oils with similar greenhouse gas intensities differently than oil sands crude. Other members of the delegation explained that while there are differences in views in Canada regarding the development of the oil sands, they wondered how the FQD had been developed and whether the European Commission is taking an evidenced-based approach to policy-making. Members of the delegation also expressed concern that the FQD is ideologically-based in reaction to Canada's withdrawal from Kyoto.

Mr. Vis explained that climate change is a very serious issue and the EU is concerned about what Canada is doing to address it. In particular, he noted that Canada had withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol and Canadian GHG emissions are increasing. He explained that he could not address the results of the studies behind the measure because they are not yet finished, but they would be peer-reviewed by scientists within the European Commission's Directorate for Climate Action. He indicated that Canada is not being treated differently than other countries, as the measures would apply equally to bitumen or shale gas sourced from other countries. He explained that the European Commission was taking an incremental approach to the development of the FQD by addressing non-conventional sources crude oil first. He said that conventional sources of crude would be addressed at a later date. He further explained that the measures introduced by the FQD were developed to incentivise good performance of the oil sands industry rather than penalize it. According to Mr. Vis, the measure would provide the oil sands industry with the opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to reduce their GHG emissions below the baseline values established by the European Commission.

Meeting with the European Conservatives and Reformist Group from the European Parliament

The delegation was invited by Mr. Bradbourn to attend the European Conservative and Reformist (ECR) Group's meeting to have an exchange of views on CETA and other matters in Canada-EU relations. The ECR group is one of the seven main political groupings within the European Parliament, which are similar to political parties. They are organized on the left-right political spectrum rather than on a national basis. The ECR group supports a non-federalist agenda in Europe and considers itself on the centre- right of the political spectrum. Two of the Canadian delegates, Mr. Tilson and Mr. Chisu, attended this meeting. Mr. Tilson was invited to say a few words to the group. In his remarks, Mr. Tilson explained that both Canadian parliamentarians and Members of the European Parliament are frustrated by the slow pace of CETA negotiations. He also expressed his concern that the European Commission had already made up its mind regarding the Fuel Quality Directive, despite the pending results of the impact assessment of the measure. The MEPs of the ECR group expressed support for the Canadian government's position on the FQD and indicated that they would continue to lobby the European Commission on this issue, as well as for a swift conclusion of CETA negotiations. They were also interested in learning how Canada is handling foreign policy challenges associated with its Tamil diaspora from Sri Lanka and whether there was a moratorium on Arctic drilling for oil. Mr. Tilson responded that there is currently no drilling for oil in the Canadian Arctic. Mr. Chisu, as Chair of the Canada-Sri Lankan Friendship Group, discussed his experiences with the Tamil diaspora in Canada, as well as Canada's efforts to promote human rights and respect for the rule of law in Sri Lanka.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary Mission to the Republic of Lithuania, the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Union
DESTINATION	Vilnius, Lithuania and Brussels, Belgium
DATES	April 3 – 9, 2013
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Joan Fraser, Senator Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet Mr. Sean Casey Mr. Corneliu Chisu Mr. Mathieu Ravignat Mr. David Tilson Mr. Merv Tweed
STAFF	Mr. Maxime Ricard, Association Secretary Ms. Karin Phillips, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$50,145.02
ACCOMMODATION	\$14,755.27
HOSPITALITY	\$6,096.90
PER DIEMS	\$4,048.56
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00

**MISCELLANEOUS /
REGISTRATION FEES**

\$0.00

TOTAL

\$75,045.75