

Canada - Europe
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation
to the 36th Interparliamentary Meeting
with the European Parliament's Delegation
responsible for the relations with Canada and
parliamentary mission to the country that will next hold
the rotating presidency
of the Council of the European Union**

Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association

**Brussels, Belgium; Berlin, Germany; and Riga, Latvia
November 10-20, 2014**

Report

Introduction

From 10 to 13 November 2014, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association sent a delegation of six parliamentarians to Brussels, Belgium to meet with a range of European Union (EU) stakeholders, including parliamentarians and representatives from EU institutions. 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. Don Davies, M.P.; Mr. Scott Simms, M.P.; and the Honourable Senator Grant Mitchell. The delegation was accompanied by Association Secretary, Ms. Guyanne Desforges, and Advisor, Ms. Laura Barnett. 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. Alan Bowman, Deputy Head of Mission; Mr. Colin Barker, First Secretary for Trade and Economic Policy; and Ms. Meghan Lau, Second Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs and Foreign Policy. During the mission, the delegation participated in its 36th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada.

While in Belgium, the delegation also participated in activities aimed at fostering Canada-Belgium relations, hosted by His Excellency Mr. Denis Robert, Ambassador of Canada to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Mr. Peter Ivanszky, political officer from Canada's Embassy to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. As part of these activities, the delegation travelled to Ypres, where the delegation attended a service at St. Martin's Cathedral and had the honour of participating in the "Last Post" ceremony at the Menin Gate where Mr. Tilson, Senator Mitchell, and Mr. Davies laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament of Canada in honour of the soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient during the First World War. The delegation then attended a commemoration ceremony at Tyne Cot Cemetery – the largest cemetery for Commonwealth forces in the world – organized by the United Kingdom and German Embassies, where Mr. Tilson laid a wreath on behalf of the Parliament of Canada in honour of the soldiers buried there.

The delegation then travelled to Berlin, Germany to participate in meetings with stakeholders, parliamentarians and officials with respect to the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) on 14 November 2014. In Berlin, the delegation was hosted by Her Excellency Marie Gervais-Vidricaire, Ambassador of Canada to Germany, who attended meetings with the delegation along with representatives from Canada's Embassy to Germany, including Mr. Thomas Marr, Minister Counsellor, Senior Trade Commissioner; Mr. Richard Tarasofsky, Counsellor, Senior Trade Commissioner; Ms. Deborah Paul, Counsellor, Political Affairs; and Ms. Heike Echterhölter, Political Affairs Officer.

Finally, from 17 to 20 November 2014, the delegation travelled to Riga, Latvia, the country that will next hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. While in Riga, the delegation was hosted by Ms. Jeanette Stovel, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Canadian Embassies to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, who attended meetings with the delegation along with Ms. Aija Matule, General Relations and Public Affairs Officer at Canada's Embassy to Latvia. In addition to its meetings with parliamentarians,

government officials, and representatives of think tanks and business associations, on 18 November 2014, the delegation had the honour of participating in ceremonies surrounding Latvia's National Day, laying a wreath on behalf of the Parliament of Canada at the Monument of Freedom, attending the ceremonial sitting of Latvia's parliament devoted to the 96th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, witnessing the National Armed Forces Parade, and being given a guided tour of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia.

Prior to departure from Canada, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; Natural Resources Canada; Environment Canada; and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It also held a working lunch with Her Excellency Marie-Anne Coninx, Ambassador of the European Union to Canada; His Excellency Raoul Delcorde, Ambassador of Belgium to Canada; His Excellency Werner Wnendt, Ambassador of Germany to Canada; and His Excellency Juris Audariņš, Ambassador of Latvia to Canada.

This report provides an overview of the delegation's meetings in Brussels discussing issues relevant to Canada-EU relations, meetings in Berlin discussing CETA in particular, and meetings in Latvia related to the country's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Mission to the European Union in Brussels

From 10 to 13 November 2014, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association's delegation held meetings in Brussels, Belgium to discuss key issues in Canada-EU relations, including CETA, the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), the EU's proposed measures to implement the Fuel Quality Directive, the current situation in Ukraine, and foreign fighters and terrorism. During the course of its visit, the delegation met with EU parliamentarians, representatives of EU institutions, state representatives to the EU, and the Speaker of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Canadian Mission to the European Union.

Meeting with Ms. Christiane Hoehn, Advisor to the EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator

The delegation's mission began in a meeting with Ms. Christiane Hoehn, Advisor to the EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator. Ms. Hoehn provided an overview of EU initiatives to combat terrorism, with particular emphasis on responses to the Islamic State and EU citizens leaving the continent to join in that conflict. She pointed out that although national security and intelligence service work falls under EU member state jurisdiction, the EU adopted a strategy on counter-terrorism in 2005 after the bombings Madrid in order to bring the relevant players together; share best practices; create tools for law enforcement to work together in the areas of aviation security, border security, evidence standardization, etc; and provide funding for projects in third countries. In relation to the Islamic State, she noted the large numbers of foreign fighters from EU nations and highlighted the measures that the EU is taking to deal with the problem, including placing emphasis on understanding motivation and preventing departure; better communication and partnership with communities; better use of the Schengen partnership to detect suspicious travel; and a focus on rehabilitation, surveillance and prosecution upon the return of such individuals. She emphasized that creating an effective counter-narrative to the Islamic State is paramount, as is focusing on de-radicalization in communities. Hotlines

are available for parents in many countries, and emphasis is being placed on community policing and integration of policing with social services. She also mentioned the careful balance that should be struck when taking actions that can lead to further radicalization of individuals in Europe.

In response to questions from the delegation, Ms. Hoehn emphasized that the Schengen border is unlikely to change in response to these issues, although there may be need to examine it closely to determine if reforms are needed. She highlighted the importance of taking human rights and privacy concerns into consideration when undertaking counter-terrorism initiatives. She also explained that the identification of what is terrorism hinges on whether there is terrorist intent. Finally, Ms. Hoehn encouraged Canada to integrate itself further with EU counter-terrorism initiatives, including through Europol, Eurojustice, and treaties on mutual legal assistance.

Briefing with His Excellency Yves Brodeur, Permanent Representative of Canada to the North Atlantic Council; His Excellency David Plunkett, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union; and Mission Staff

Ambassador David Plunkett began the briefing session at the Embassy with a summary of some of the key issues facing the European Union today, including significant institutional change, with the new Parliament, the new Commission, and the new President of the European Council; the state of the European economy; and the rise of euroskepticism. He went on to delve into some of the prominent issues in Canada-EU relations: next steps for CETA at the EU level and controversy surrounding the inclusion of the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provision in CETA; the relevance of SPA; and discussions surrounding energy supply and climate change in Canada and Europe. On this latter point, Ambassador Plunkett highlighted Europe's dependency on Russia for its energy needs and discussed the EU's revised proposal for implementation of the EU's Fuel Quality Directive that may open the market somewhat to Canadian oil. He also highlighted the opportunities for constructive dialogue between Canada and Europe with respect to climate change and environmental commitments. Ambassador Plunkett went on to discuss the current situation on the Arctic Council, the recent agreement between Canada and the EU with respect to indigenously hunted seal products, and opening the door to EU observer status. Ambassador Yves Brodeur emphasized the importance of the Arctic Council as a forum for dialogue and cooperation among diverse nations.

Ambassador Brodeur also provided the delegation with an overview of Canada's and key European nations' role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) operations today and many of the current security issues facing Europe. In this context, he highlighted many areas of common interest to the EU and NATO, including tensions between Russia and Ukraine, cyber-defence, counter-terrorism, and energy security. He emphasized the importance of the September 2014 NATO Summit in Wales and NATO's current readiness to respond to threats in the East. However, Ambassador Brodeur was reluctant to characterize current tensions with Russia as a "new Cold War," particularly given ongoing communication and cooperation between Russia and NATO allies on a variety of issues.

Finally, Ms. Cindy Munro, Counsellor at the Mission of Canada to the EU, spoke to the delegation about the current status of Canadian visa obligations for Romanians and Bulgarians, emphasizing the recent progress made for Romania in recent months through the business express programme and the recognition of Romania as a designated country of origin for asylum purposes.

Working Lunch on Ukraine with Ambassador David Plunkett, think tanks and Heads of Mission from EU Member States

At a working lunch to discuss the on-going conflict in Ukraine, the delegation met with Ambassador Plunkett; Ambassador Anders Ahnlid, Permanent Representative of Sweden; Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis, Permanent Representative of Lithuania; Ambassador Salomé Samadashvili, visiting Fellow at the Wilfred Martens Centre for European Studies and former Head of Mission to the EU for Georgia; Ms. Amanda Paul, policy analyst and senior programme executive at the European Policy Centre; and Ms. Caroline Vinot, Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of France at the EU. One of the primary concerns expressed at this lunch, particularly by Ms. Paul and Ambassador Samadashvili, related to the need for a viable government in Ukraine to ensure that effective reforms are carried out. There was a fear that “Ukraine fatigue” may be setting in and that it was important for Europe and Canada to maintain sanctions against Russia. Ambassador Karoblis noted the negative impact that sanctions are having on Lithuania, particularly given Lithuania’s dependence on Russia for its energy needs – energy is an important factor in the Ukraine-Russia crisis. However, he noted that Lithuania is beginning to find alternative energy solutions and the sanctions are working – security must be paramount. Ambassador Ahnlid also emphasized the importance of the sanctions and of cooperation among democratic nations, as well as finding ways to reduce dependence on Russian oil and gas. There was also some discussion among participants of the implications of increased Russian military activity in the Baltic region and other Russian spheres of influence.

Meeting with Mr. Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, Head of Division for Canada and the United States of America, European External Action Service

The delegation met with Mr. Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, Head of Division for Canada and the United States of America at the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU’s foreign policy branch. Ambassador Coninx was also in attendance. Mr. Guimaraes began with an overview of EU-Canada relations from a foreign policy perspective, with emphasis on CETA, SPA, security and defence, energy security and the Arctic. The delegation spent considerable time probing the ratification process for CETA at the EU level, discussing procedures at the Council of the European Union and the issue of whether the trade agreement is one of mixed competence or not. Mr. Stephan Marquardt, Deputy head of the EEAS Legal Affairs Division, delved into the technicalities of the ratification process, while Mr. Guimaraes emphasized that fact that even if CETA is determined to be a “mixed” agreement, a significant proportion of it can nevertheless be implemented provisionally. Ratification at the EU member state level will not hold up implementation of the bulk of the agreement. Ambassador Coninx pointed out that the mixed nature of the EU-Singapore trade agreement is currently being considered by the European Court of Justice, and that this decision should ultimately provide some guidance for the EU with respect to how to interpret CETA. Mr. Guimaraes also discussed the ramifications of the EU’s trade negotiations with the United States (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP) as having brought the controversial issue of investor-state dispute settlement to the forefront, but argued that this was a good opportunity to demonstrate how ISDS provisions could operate and dispel fears. Finally, the delegation discussed the linkages between CETA and SPA. Mr. Guimaraes emphasized that the EU usually links the bilateral trade agreements that it signs to bilateral cooperation agreements such as SPA. However, faced with Canadian concerns about direct linkages

between the two agreements, and because SPA is the first such bilateral agreement that the EU has signed with a developed country, the EU accepted a modified approach that does not create a legally binding linkage to CETA in the case of a serious violation of essential SPA commitments. It is unclear whether the EU will negotiate such a cooperation agreement with the United States in tandem with the TTIP negotiations.

Breakfast meeting with Mr. Siegfried Bracke, President of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, and Ambassador Denis Robert

The delegation met for breakfast with Mr. Siegfried Bracke, President of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, to discuss issues of relevance to Canada-Belgian relations, accompanied by Ambassador Robert. The meeting began with a discussion of the 22 October 2014 attack in the Canadian Parliament and a discussion of security in the parliamentary precinct in Belgium, as well as domestic terrorism. The Ambassador emphasized the good relationship between Canada and Belgium on security issues. President Bracke also led a discussion on the structure of the Belgian parliament and the role of the Senate, as well as delving into some reflections on current Belgian government economic policies that have led to protests in Brussels. The language divides in Belgium and in Canada were also a topic of interest, with President Bracke and delegates noting that it seemed that French-English tensions had diminished in Canada in recent years, while there was little sense of national cohesion in Belgium, with very separate realities for French-speaking and Dutch-speaking populations. The breakfast concluded with a discussion of how Canada deals with immigration flows and integration, with Ambassador Robert pointing out that the logistics of immigration flows are significantly different for Europe and Canada.

Meeting with Mr. Sandy Boyle, President of the European Economic and Social Committee Follow-Up Committee on Trade

The delegation met with Mr. Sandy Boyle, President of the European Economic and Social Committee Follow-Up Committee on Trade. The European Economic and Social Committee is an advisory body of the European Union made up of 353 civil society representatives organized into employer, employee and other interest groupings. Mr. Boyle represents the employees group. Mr. Boyle began the meeting with a presentation of the economic situation in Europe, noting the patchy economic recovery of member states in the Eurozone and the potential importance of CETA in this context. He placed some emphasis on the serious problem of poverty in Europe as a consequence of austerity measures, and noted the huge surge in youth unemployment. With respect to CETA, Mr. Boyle highlighted civil society concerns, noting that Canada has little to fear from the EU on procurement issues. Of particular importance, he noted the controversy surrounding the ISDS provisions, an issue that divides employees and employers, including the need to address concerns about definitions (for example, of “frivolous claims” and “fair and equitable treatment”), as well as fears surrounding the fact that disputes will be decided by a private tribunal. He emphasized the unprecedented size of feedback that was received in the EU public consultation on ISDS and the need for broad-based involvement of civil society. Finally, he highlighted that discussions surrounding CETA are integrally linked to the EU’s negotiations with the US on TTIP. Moving on to other topics, Mr. Boyle responded to questions from the delegation by highlighting the importance of labour mobility for skilled technical labour, and the need to think carefully about the age of retirement in the context of youth unemployment.

Working lunch with Mr. Bernd Kölmel, Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada, and other Members of the European Parliament

The Canadian delegation met for a working lunch with Mr. Bernd Kölmel, Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada; as well as Ms. Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl, Vice Chair of the delegation; and Ms. Kathleen Van Brempt, another member of the delegation. The lunch began with words of welcome and introductions, as the composition of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada has changed since the European elections and the Canadian delegation did not know the new members. Mr. Kölmel provided a brief overview of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group's perspective on the importance of recognizing subsidiarity within the European Union context, as some issues, such as social welfare, are often very specific to individual nations. All members then began a discussion of energy and environmental concerns, including a conversation about Canada's oil sands and the Fuel Quality Directive. Members of the European Delegation mentioned interest in seeing a report mentioned in this discussion – the 2013 Final Report of ICF International, "Independent Assessment of the European Commission's Fuel Quality Directive's 'Conventional' Default Value," which highlights the comparability of Canadian crude with the Russian and Nigerian crude currently bought by European nations. Members also discussed the possibility of a pipeline that could supply Canadian oil to Europe, and the environmental concerns, as well as aboriginal treaty rights, that need to be dealt with in this context.

Meeting with Members of the European Parliament from the Committee on International Trade

The delegation was joined by Ambassador Plunkett for a roundtable discussion on CETA with various members of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade, including Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Mr. Artis Pabriks, who is official rapporteur for CETA. Mr. Pabriks emphasized that the Group of the European People's Party generally supports CETA, recognizing the agreement's importance for transatlantic relations beyond trade. Mr. Sorin Moisă indicated that the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament was also generally favourable to CETA, provided that concerns with respect to public services and ISDS were taken seriously and addressed in good faith. Mr. Yannick Jadot, however, noted that the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance had serious concerns about globalization and privatization with respect to CETA, and saw ISDS as the incarnation of these fears. The Group will not be supporting the agreement. Ms. Anne-Marie Mineur also emphasized that the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left were opposed to CETA because of fears that individuals would lose out to large companies and because of concerns about the supranational direction that the EU had taken on in this and other respects. Mr. Pabriks emphasized that it is the duty of parliamentarians to clarify the agreement for the public in order to address their fears.

Meeting with Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur on Arctic Issues, Mr. Michael Gahler

The delegation ended the day in a meeting with MEP Michael Gahler, rapporteur for the European Parliament on Arctic Issues; Mr. Steffen Weber, Secretary General of the EU Arctic Forum; and Ambassador Coninx. Mr. Weber began the meeting with an overview

of the EU Arctic Forum as a bridge builder to stakeholders in the Arctic, and noting that Canada's objection to EU observer status at the Arctic Council had now been lifted. Mr. Gahler, Mr. Simms and Ambassador Coninx discussed the practical implications of the recent joint EU-Canada agreement with respect to indigenous seal products. Mr. Gahler went on to highlight issues of importance for the EU in the Arctic, including research, the development of energy resources for European companies, and the significant potential for engagement and cooperation with other nations through this Arctic lens. He mentioned the possibility of working together on common projects with Canada, such as cartography in uncharted waters. Mr. Weber also highlighted the possibilities for economic cooperation among nations involved in the Arctic, including through investments and the development of new technologies.

36th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada

The delegation's last day in Brussels was dedicated to its 36th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting with the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada. The morning began in the Plenary Chamber of the European Parliament, as the Canadian delegation observed a series of votes from the diplomatic gallery. Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mr. Antonio Tajani, took a moment during proceedings to publicly welcome the Canadian delegation to Brussels, highlighting the 22 October attack at the Parliament buildings and the solidarity of European parliamentarians with their Canadian counterparts. This greeting was followed by a lunch in the Presidential dining room at the Parliament, hosted by Vice-President Tajani and attended by the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada; Ambassador Coninx; Ambassador Plunkett; Christian Leffler, Managing Director for the Americas at the European External Action Service; and staff from the European Parliament and Canada's Mission to the EU.

Members of the Canadian delegation and the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada then took part in a working session focussing on CETA and SPA. Ambassadors Coninx and Plunkett, and Mr. Leffler were also in attendance. Mr. Leffler provided an overview of Canada-EU relations and the importance of CETA and SPA as the foundation of a new partnership. He also highlighted a few outstanding issues in this relationship: concerns with respect to visa reciprocity for Bulgaria and Romania, a request for Canadian participation in a European advisory committee on Ukraine, the need for a better structure for dialogue on energy concerns, and the need for the EU to achieve formal observer status at the Arctic Council. He finished by emphasizing the need to work together to deal with Russia. European and Canadian parliamentarians and Ambassador Plunkett also engaged in an exchange on concerns with respect to CETA. Responding to a question on the quality of Canadian meat under CETA, Ambassador Plunkett noted that CETA was not an indication of a "regulatory race to the bottom" – the overall outcome of the agreement is balanced and fully respects health and safety concerns. There was also a discussion about ISDS and the impact on public services that have been privatized (the so called "ratchet effect"). Mr. Victor Negrescu asked about expected timelines for visas to be lifted for Romania and was told about recent progress and high level meetings in this area. Mr. Ricardo Serrão Santos emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on the Galway Statement on Atlantic Ocean Cooperation which is mentioned in SPA. The meeting ended with a discussion of ratification processes at the EU level for both CETA and SPA, and the fact that SPA is a mixed agreement so will need to be ratified by national parliaments, as well as at the EU level.

Mr. Bernd Kölmel concluded by noting that the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Canada is planning a mission to Canada in 2015. Mr. Tilson indicated that the Canada Europe Parliamentary Association will be happy to host the European delegation during the visit.

Mission to Berlin, Germany

The Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association's delegation held meetings in Berlin, Germany on 14 November 2014 to discuss key issues in Canada-EU relations, with particular emphasis on CETA. During the course of its visit, the delegation met with German parliamentarians, think tanks, experts and officials from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from Canada's Embassy to Germany.

Briefing with Her Excellency Marie Gervais-Vidricaire, Ambassador of Canada to Germany, and Embassy Staff

Her Excellency Marie Gervais-Vidricaire welcomed the delegation to Germany and began the briefing with an overview of German affairs from a Canadian perspective. She highlighted the fact that Germany is an important player in modern Europe and hopes to become further engaged, with more responsibilities, in international affairs. Recent challenges in this regard include concerns about Russia balanced against business concerns about the effect of sanctions, and recent allegations of American electronic surveillance in Germany. In terms of the economy, Germany has a strong industry-based economy and has recently begun to move away from nuclear energy towards renewables. Germany currently imports a significant portion of its gas, oil and coal from Russia and is now looking to diversify its energy supply. With respect to CETA, Germany was originally supportive of the agreement but may now have concerns about ISDS provisions in CETA due to negotiations with the United States on TTIP. Germany is also concerned about perceptions of lack of transparency in the CETA negotiation process – the Social Democratic Party (which is part of the governing coalition with the Christian Democratic Union) is taking this issue seriously before giving its approval to CETA. Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire emphasized the importance of recognizing that lawsuits using the ISDS mechanism are rare under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and there is no reason to believe that they would become more frequent with CETA. The ISDS mechanism in CETA has also been modified to meet European needs, and the possibility of frivolous claims has been virtually eliminated. Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire also emphasized the strong potential for access to procurement markets in Canada and the EU through CETA. Mr. Thomas Marr, Minister Counsellor, Senior Trade Commissioner, concluded the briefing by emphasizing that even if CETA is found to be a mixed competence agreement, almost all of it could still be provisionally implemented once approved at the EU level.

Roundtable Meeting with German Parliamentarians, Think Tanks, Experts and Embassy Staff

The briefing with the Ambassador was followed by a roundtable meeting organized by the Embassy with a wide variety of German parliamentarians, think tanks, and experts, as well as Embassy staff, with the aim of discussing CETA from a Canadian-German perspective. Echoing Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire's earlier comments, a number of speakers raised the issue of transparency during the negotiation process and the fact that CETA has not

yet been translated into German, so it is easy for misunderstandings to propagate. While Canadian provinces were consulted early on in the negotiation process, EU nations are only seeing the agreement post-negotiations. Mr. Johann Saathoff (Member of Parliament for the Social Democratic Party) noted that Germany is generally comfortable with ISDS mechanisms, which it has included in many trade agreements in the past. However, there are specific fears about the United States and ISDS that arise through CETA, particularly looking at the way that the mechanism has been used under NAFTA, where the US government has never lost in litigation (although US companies have lost). Nevertheless, Mr. Marr of the Embassy highlighted the fact that fears expressed in Canada before NAFTA came into effect were never ultimately realized. Mr. Felix Neugart of the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry emphasized that what may be needed is clarification of the ISDS provisions, including definitions of “expropriation” and “regulatory space.” There was also some discussion among Mr. Neugart and Ms. Franziska Gross, Policy Advisor to a Christian Democratic Union parliamentarian, about the need to help the small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector to use the CETA process to build their export capacity, and possibly tailor the ISDS provisions to their needs. Mr. Michael Vollprecht of the EU Commission Office in Germany and Mr. Marr also emphasized some of the measures that Canada had already taken to bring itself into line with CETA requirements, including changes to intellectual property laws. Ultimately, Mr. Wolfgang Müller, a Senior Economic Policy Advisor at the Social Democratic Party Parliamentary Group, and Mr. Saathoff, emphasized that Germany is ultimately very favourable towards CETA, but the party wants to be sure that society’s concerns, particularly the concerns of average workers about ISDS, are heard so that the whole country can be behind the agreement.

Meeting with the Bundestag Economic Affairs and Energy Committee

The delegation then went to the German Parliament (Bundestag) to meet with members of the Economic Affairs and Energy Committee to discuss CETA. The meeting was led by Deputy Chairman, Mr. Klaus Barthel of the Social Democratic Party, raised German concerns about ISDS. Mr. Klaus Ernst, of the Left Party indicated his party’s concerns about transparency, the ratchet effect, and whether there is a need for ISDS given the capacity of regular courts to deal with issues under CETA. Dr. Matthias Heider of the Christian Democratic Union party, emphasized that politics would clearly define each representative’s opinion at the meeting, but that his party was generally happy with CETA. There was more transparency in this trade negotiation process than in the past, and the German constitution had strong enough investor protections that ISDS was unlikely to be a concern. Ms. Andrea Wicklein of the Social Democratic Party noted that CETA was of great importance for future cooperation and trade between Canada and Germany but that public skepticism needs to be addressed, as well as fears that environmental protections may be vulnerable to ISDS. She hoped that the agreement would be found to be one of mixed competency so that EU member states would have a full opportunity to have a transparent debate in their parliaments. Dr. Joachim Pfeiffer of the Christian Democratic Union mentioned that it will be necessary to deal with differences between common law and civil law systems when setting up ISDS. The meeting ended on a positive note, with an emphasis on ensuring that politicians and industry representatives respond to the inaccurate mythologies being propagated by providing valid information and positive messages about the benefits of CETA.

Working Lunch with Members of the German-Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group

The German-Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group, led by its Chair, Mr. Klaus-Peter Flosbach, hosted a lunch for the Canadian delegation, Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire and Embassy staff. Mr. Flosbach welcomed the Canadian delegation with a few words about the significance of 2014, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, and the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Mr. Tilson followed with an overview of what the Canadian delegation had heard so far in Brussels and Berlin, and both he and Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire provided a summary of the positive impact that CETA will have for Canada, Germany, and the EU. On the issue of CETA, Mr. Jürgen Hardt of the Christian Democratic Union emphasized that the agreement was likely to be translated into German early in the new year. In the meantime, he noted that ISDS is clearly the issue of importance to Germans at the moment. An expert opinion was commissioned in Germany which concluded that ISDS is in line with the German constitution – now the issue is open to political debate. Mr. Alexander Ulrich of the Left Party expressed criticism of CETA, the lack of transparency surrounding the agreement, and the fact that Germans are now being told that there will be no opportunity to make changes to CETA or possibly even ratify it at the national level. He asked about the degree of transparency surrounding the agreement in Canada and emphasized the need to always remember the larger picture – such as environmental standards – when moving forward. Dr. Matthias Zimmer of the Christian Democratic Union noted that consumer protection standards are similar in Canada and the EU and that diversity of products will be a positive outcome of the agreement. He also raised the example of Vattenfalls, a Swedish energy company that is currently suing the Germany government because the country is moving away from nuclear energy. Dr. Zimmer wondered whether having ISDS in place would make any difference in such a situation. Mr. Bernd Rützel of the Social Democratic Party raised the fact that Germany has included ISDS provisions in many other agreements but usually only in agreements with countries that do not have internationally recognized judicial systems. As such, it is unclear to some in Germany why ISDS is needed in CETA. Mr. Harald Ebner of the Green party agreed that CETA is a good agreement, but that the inclusion of ISDS needs to be re-examined. He also highlighted concerns about non-tariff barriers and concerns surrounding standards, such as non-genetically modified fodder.

Ambassador Gervais-Vidricaire responded to some of these concerns by emphasizing that it is rare that trade negotiations are conducted in a transparent manner – this is the nature of the beast. Canada consulted with its provinces early because the EU was unwilling to enter into negotiations unless the provinces had already signalled their agreement in principle. She also emphasized that ISDS was necessary because judicial systems were so varied across the 28 EU Member States. Mr. Flosbach concluded the lunch by emphasizing that CETA is not TTIP, and needs to be seen independently from negotiations with the United States. He noted the importance of the Canadian delegation's visit, highlighting the fact that one new member had joined the Friendship Group during the course of the delegation's visit.

Meeting at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy

The delegation concluded its mission in Berlin in a meeting with State Secretary Matthias Machnig at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. Mr. Machnig responded to many of the concerns about CETA heard during the day by making it clear that Germany has no intention of renegotiating CETA but simply wanted to clarify some issues in the legal scrubbing process in order to mollify concerns and satisfy the German public of the rationale behind the agreement. He emphasized Germany's strong interest in breaking

down barriers to trade and expressed confidence that CETA would be in force by the end of 2016. In response to a question with respect to ISDS and the ratchet effect, he recognized the possibility of suing under ISDS with respect of re-nationalization of public utilities, but again emphasized the need to handle fear surrounding such issues by convincing the public that CETA is ultimately in their interest.

The meeting ended with a discussion surrounding climate change and German initiatives in this regard, and Mr. Machnig emphasized that the economy is an important part of dealing with environmental concerns. The strongest economy will also be the most efficient. He said that if a country or company can reduce its energy and resource costs, it can become more sustainable and competitive. Intelligent regulation and standards can lead to innovation and new markets.

Mission to Riga, Latvia, the Country to Hold the Next Rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union

From 17 to 10 November 2014, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association's delegation held meetings in Riga, Latvia to learn about the country's priorities for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and discuss key issues in Canada-EU relations, including CETA, energy security, the current situation in Ukraine, and security in the Baltic states. During the course of its visit, the delegation met with Latvian parliamentarians, EU parliamentarians, representatives of think tanks and business associations, government officials, and representatives from the NATO Centre of Excellence in Riga. In addition, the delegation was briefed by officials from the Canada's Embassy to Latvia.

Briefing with Ms. Jeanette, Chargé d'affaires a.i. for the Canadian Embassies to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and Ms. Aija Matule, General Relations and Public Affairs Officer at Canada's Embassy to Latvia

In her welcome and briefing to the delegation, Ms. Jeanette Stovel provided a comprehensive overview of the state of affairs in Latvia in 2014 from European, Canadian and national perspectives. Situating Latvia within the European Union, Ms. Stovel highlighted the fact that Latvia joined the Eurozone in January 2014, and that Riga is 2014 Capital of Culture for the EU. She noted that Latvia's priorities heading into the Presidency will focus on growth (with strong support for CETA in Latvia), the digital agenda, and security (including a focus on security in the immediate region, the transatlantic partnership, the Eastern Partnership, and the EU- Central Asia Partnership). On this latter point, Latvia will be organizing an Eastern Partnership summit during its Presidency in a search for new approaches. In terms of Canadian-Latvian relations, Ms. Stovel highlighted that Canada has been particularly active in the region over the last year through its military presence and a \$1 million contribution to each of NATO's three Centres of Excellence in the Baltics.

Discussing recent developments in Latvia, Ms. Stovel noted that the October 2014 elections brought the same three-party centre-right governing coalition back into power, although it was the pro-Russian Harmony party that in fact received the most votes. Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma became the country's first female prime minister in January 2014. Latvia currently has a challenging relationship with Russia, given that it is former occupied territory, and currently 28% of the population is ethnic Russian. Thirteen percent of the population hold neither Latvian nor Russian citizenship, although they have many

benefits of Latvian citizenship, including a passport, although they do not have the right to vote or work in the civil service. Latvian language skills are a pre-requisite to Latvian citizenship. In this context, there is heightened anxiety in Latvia today with respect to aggressive Russian manoeuvres in the region. Latvia has recently committed to increasing its contributions to NATO.

Ms. Stovel highlighted important aspects of the Latvian economy, including the fact that Latvia and the other Baltic states are world leaders with respect internet speed and digital infrastructure. However, the country is also one of the poorest in the EU. It was badly hit by the 2008 recession and is currently significantly affected by sanctions against Russia, one of Latvia's largest markets for agriculture and dairy products. Nevertheless, Latvia has now paid off the loans that it took on after the recession and is experiencing high GDP growth. Unemployment currently stands at 11%, and emigration is keeping youth unemployment at approximately 25%. In response to questions from the delegation, Ms. Stovel mentioned that current significant drivers of the Latvian economy are information technology, pharmaceuticals, petroleum, transit and services. In terms of Canadian connections, a Canadian nickel mining company is currently encouraging the Latvian government to develop a legal framework for mining, and Bombardier is looking to Latvia as a hub for its repairs. A recent agreement on rail tracks has also seen Latvia moving away from the Russian gauge.

Members of the delegation followed Ms. Stovel's remarks with a series of questions highlighting Latvia's comparable position on climate change, domestic actions on Ebola, and low levels of immigration to the country – while there are some Roma in Latvia (making up 10% of the population of some towns), experiences with integration appear to be relatively positive despite some accounts of discrimination.

Meeting with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima)

Mr. Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš of the Unity party and Chair of the Latvian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed the delegation and Ms. Stovel to the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) and began the meeting by highlighting the importance of the security situation in Latvia presently – this was the issue that dominated the October elections. On the issue of CETA, he indicated that most of the details appeared to be worked out and only translation and legal scrubbing was left. The issue that seems to have brought concerns about CETA to the fore is the concurrent negotiations between the EU and United States on TTIP. Mr. Kalniņš emphasized that Latvia is in favour of closer relations with North America in terms of economics and security, and that Latvia hopes to move both agreements forward during its Presidency.

On the issue of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Mr. Kalniņš noted that one significant priority will be to emphasize the importance of the Eastern Partnership in the context of current Russian aggression, in order to normalize relations with Russia, to focus on building democracy in these countries, and to encourage engagement and support from transatlantic partners in this regard. In response to questions from the delegation with respect to Russia's motivation, Kalniņš emphasized the importance of Russian nationalism and the apparent need to emphasize Russian power by extending its sphere of influence. Other members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, including Mr. Rihard Kols of the National Alliance party, emphasized the fact that Russia is testing NATO readiness and unity – this is an important moment for NATO to show strong collaboration and to rethink EU military strategy while building a new EU security architecture. The point was made that Russia is an important market for Latvian goods. As

such, the country is currently receiving some aid from the EU and is looking elsewhere to new markets, such as China. Mr. Kalniņš also provided some information about the NATO Centre of Excellence in Riga which is focussing on strategic communications and producing very useful reports, particularly with respect to Russian propoganda and attempts to paint the West in a negative light. He emphasized that this is one area where Canada can provide some assistance, possibly in addition to the Canadian staff member and \$1 million commitment from the Canadian government. He highlighted the fact that Latvia is realizing that when it contributes militarily abroad, it encourages military support for itself at home. The conversation about perceptions of Russia in Latvia ended with an intervention by a member of the Harmony party and the language needs of the ethnic Russians in Latvia and other countries such as Ukraine. The meeting concluded with a discussion of the fact that in recent years Latvia has provided residency permits to a number of individuals who invested heavily in the Latvian economy, which has given rise to fears among some Latvians for both national security and the economy.

Meeting with the European Affairs Committee of the Saeima

Next, the delegation and Ms. Stovel met with members of the Saeima's European Affairs Committee. The Chair, Ms. Lolita Čigāne of the Unity party, expressed Latvia's appreciation for Canadian military support and the strong NATO response that it has received in recent months. She emphasized that the Eastern Partnership and the Russia-Ukraine crisis are likely to dominate the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in addition to Latvia's other priorities. She noted that Latvia hopes to quickly ratify CETA and follow through with TTIP negotiations, while respecting the need for transparency in these processes. Both CETA and TTIP are symbols of the importance of working together through multilateral forums rather than turning to aggression. She noted that Latvia's principle exports are information and communications technology, timber, and food produce (which is currently affected by the sanctions against Russia). The Latvian economy has good capacity for recovery and resilience in terms of niche products.

In response to a question about how Canada might be able to further support Latvia, Mr. Atis Lejiņš of the Unity party noted that one possibility would be to provide funding to learning exchange programs for students within the EU at the Riga Law School. Ms. Čigāne also emphasized the need to continue supporting Ukraine through high level meetings and supplies. Following up on the issue of Russian aggression, Mr. Armands Krauze of the Union and Greens and Farmers party emphasized that the trade sanctions on Russia have had a significant impact on Latvia, as 10% of Latvian trade usually goes to the Russian market. The Latvian dairy sector has already declined by 30%, but many producers are beginning to find new markets. In this context, Mr. Lejiņš highlighted energy security, and the fact that Latvia currently buys all of its gas from Russia. In the aim of reducing this dependency and increasing competition to lower gas prices, Latvia was working in partnership with the other Baltic states to develop a regional liquefied natural gas capacity. However, Latvia was unable to raise the financing needed, and Lithuania went ahead with this project, acquiring a floating gas terminal on its own. Nevertheless, Latvia currently has the largest gas storage facility in the Baltics.

A discussion was then launched with respect to Latvia's digital capacity, and Mr. Lejiņš highlighted that Latvia is hoping to push for a common digital market in the EU. At the moment, another of Latvia's major initiatives is working closely with other Baltic states on electronic signatures. Ms. Čigāne also responded to a question about Latvia's entry into the Eurozone, emphasizing that it was ultimately a very smooth process despite some

nostalgia for the old currency, as the country was well-prepared and proceeded in a transparent fashion. She highlighted the fact that entering the Eurozone is meaningful from both a geopolitical and strategic perspective. In response to questions about gender equality and climate change, Mr. Lejiņš noted that the number of women in the Saeima is low and in fact declined in the October 2014 elections. Mr. Krauze noted that there are challenges and opportunities presented when dealing with climate change. Latvia is a very green country but needs to ensure that it does not stagnate in this context.

Working lunch with Latvian Parliamentarians

The delegation hosted Ms. Stovel and a group of Latvia parliamentarians – Mr. Vjačeslavs Dombrovskis of the Unity Party, Mr. Atis Lejiņš, Mr. Ivans Klementjevs of the Harmony party, and Mr. Mārtiņš Bondars of the Regional Alliance party – for a working lunch to discuss various issues of interest to Latvian-Canadian relations. Mr. Tilson opened the lunch with remarks on the delegations' experiences so far in Riga, as well as the history of Canadian-Latvian relations, emphasizing the importance of bilateral relations and parliamentary exchanges. Mr. Dombrovskis followed by echoing the fact that the Latvian-Canadian community is one of the most influential Latvian communities outside the country, and provided an overview of Latvia's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He and his colleagues thanked Canada for its support in 1991 as Latvia moved towards independence from the Soviet Union. Mr. Tilson and Ms. Stovel emphasized Canada's continuing support with respect to Latvia's concerns about Russia. Mr. Dombrovskis and Mr. Lejiņš emphasized fears about the impact of Russian propaganda through broadcasting and the capability of EU nations to counter such messages. They feared that the world was heading towards a new Cold War, with international stand-offs over recognition of occupied territories. This was followed by an exchange assessing the potential for closer Russian-Chinese ties, and attempting to understand the motivation behind Russia's recent attempts to extend its sphere of influence. Mr. Dombrovskis and Ms. Stovel also had an exchange about energy potential in the region and Latvia's need to diversify. Mr. Dombrovskis noted that there was little potential for renewables such as solar power in Latvia due to the lack of year-round sunshine.

Meeting with the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The delegation then went to the headquarters of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to meet with the President, Mr. Gundars Strautmanis; Vice-President, Mr. Aigars Rostovskis; and Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Board, Mr. Mārtiņš Perts. Mr. Strautmanis began the meeting with opening remarks highlighting that the Chamber of Commerce is the largest organization representing business interests in Latvia. He noted that the organization is looking forward to seeing CETA in order to understand its benefits from both the EU and Latvian perspectives. In this regard, he responded to a question about how SMEs are promoted abroad and encouraged to access foreign markets by noting that this is also the realm of the Investment and Development Agency. For its part, the Chamber of Commerce provides seminars and forums for SMEs to exchange experiences. He noted that life is not easy for SMEs, although microtaxation is working well for the moment. Among other things, the court system is very slow.

Mr. Strautmanis and Mr. Rostovskis responded to a question about immigration, noting that a number of wealthy Russians have been immigrating to Latvia recently. The Latvian birth rate is not high, so this immigration could be positive, but there is a need for

regulation, as most of the money from these immigrants goes towards real estate, which is not a sustainable form of investment. This is a deeply political issue as well. In response to a question about the impact of sanctions against Russia on Latvia, Mr. Strautmanis and Mr. Rostovskis noted that the government is providing funding to cover losses for Latvian producers, but it is not enough. The Chamber of Commerce is working closely with the Ministry of the Economy, and trying to find new markets, such as China. On the issue of why Latvia is so strong in the digital field, Mr. Rostovskis noted that the Soviet education provided a strong grounding for those now working in this field. He emphasized the need to use Latvian physical infrastructure better. Latvia has much to contribute in this regard, as it has three ice-free ports. In response to a question about youth unemployment, he noted that Latvia needed tax and investment incentives to make it easier for people to find attractive jobs in Latvia rather than leaving for other countries.

Meeting with Officials from the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development at the Riga IT Demo Centre

At the Riga IT Demo Centre, the delegation met with Mr. Arnis Daugulis, Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development (ICT and e-governance); Ms. Žaneta Mikosa, Deputy State Secretary (EU Presidency issues); Gatis Ozols, electronic services division; and Pēteris Veits, senior expert. Mr. Daugulis provided the delegation with an overview of Latvia's Digital Europe priority for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He noted that the key message would be "digital by default," meaning that all EU initiatives should take digital aspects into account. Within this context, Latvia hopes to focus on building trust and reducing barriers within a digital single market, working on public sector modernization through digital technology, and emphasizing safety and security in cyberspace. Much planning is already underway at the EU level on such initiatives, so this is the opportunity for Latvia to bring its influence to the table. In response to a question from the delegation, Mr. Daugulis elaborated on the concept of a single digital market, noting that this would mean eliminating roaming charges throughout Europe. The rationale would ultimately be to use digital means to encourage growth and new jobs. He noted the current fragmentation of digital capabilities across the EU, which slows the continent down such that it loses its competitive advantage. He emphasized that the real opportunities here are for the private sector – the public sector would only be involved in providing coverage for "white spots" (areas with no internet connection). In Latvia he noted that the government also has a role in dealing with the digital divide by providing a network of libraries with free internet. Mr. Daugulis ended by highlighting the need to balance confidence in the security of the internet with wide coverage and usability.

Mr. Veits mentioned that data protection issues and legislative proposals with respect to copyright will be coming before the EU in the coming months. The digital agenda is likely one that will overlap into future presidencies. Following up on the copyright issue, he said that although copyright legislation is currently being drafted, it is unclear whether it will be generic or detailed. To what extent is harmonization needed? They will be looking at how copyright policy can be improved throughout the EU. On the issue of e-signatures, he highlighted the fact that the system is working well in Latvia, but the next challenge is to ensure that such signatures can be acknowledged between states. Mr. Daugulis highlighted the fact that the new EU Commission has received a €3 billion boost, and Ms. Mikosa noted that in the long term, going digital is more efficient, so will lead to savings. Mr. Daugulis followed up by noting that digitization of government services is about more than putting the technologies in place – the whole system needs to be re-examined. If the

project is a success then the investment is repaid. Mr. Veits echoed this, noting that it is not about pouring money into a project, but about ensuring that one includes such digital issues in education as well, so that it simply becomes part of the culture.

The delegation took the time during its meeting to watch a demonstration video from the Riga IT Demo Centre that elaborated on Latvia's digital infrastructure. Among other highlights, the video noted that Latvia's involvement in the digital realm was in part sparked by the economic crisis in 2008, which pushed companies to search for efficiencies. Latvia currently is a leader in the use of e-banking services. The delegation was also given a tour of the Demo Centre and shown some of the innovations that are becoming available to consumers.

Meeting with the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga

The delegation began its last day in Riga in a meeting with Deputy Director Col. Aivar Jaeski and Military Public Relations expert Lt. Col. (ret'd) Rita LePage of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga. The Centre began operations in January 2014 and received formal accreditation in September. Lt. Col. LePage began the meeting by discussing how the Centre proposes to use the \$1 million in funding provided by the Canadian government, focusing on target analysis capability in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine for 2015. She noted that the Centre is currently operational but not fully staffed. It receives funding from Latvia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Estonia and Lithuania, who will each also be providing one personnel to the Centre for an eventual total of 20 employees. Col. Jaeski emphasized that the Centre's goal is not to grow into a large organization, but to get as many nations as possible on board. The Centre's initiatives target sponsoring nations' needs. In this context, he encouraged Canada to send an employee to the Centre or to make Lt. Col. LePage its official representative – she is currently sponsored by the Latvian government.

Col. Jaeski emphasized the unique nature of the Centre and its emphasis on strategic communications. At the moment, the Baltic states are very concerned about the security environment, despite the fact that there is no direct threat and they are members of NATO. From one perspective, he said that the Centre aims to "calm down the fog of war." Lt. Col. LePage noted that one of the primary areas of focus for the Centre is Russian propaganda. Right now the message coming from Russia is one of restoring Russian pride, hearkening back to former glory. There is a clear need to understand the damage that was done to this pride when the USSR split apart. The Centre recently released a report that analyzed Russian statements on television and via Twitter, and concluded that Russia had signalled its move on Crimea long ago, but other countries had not picked up on the signals. The Centre is interested in analyzing how to counter such propaganda, looking at the images we project, what nations say and attempting to influence behaviour change. Col. Jaeski noted that today, NATO is stronger than ever, but it must not ignore the security environment – it is important to maintain defence spending and expertise. Beyond Russia, the Centre has also been looking at the Islamic State and radicalization in an attempt to better understand target audience motivations and what are compelling narratives that can influence behaviour change. Although the Centre has no capacity to undertake counter-propaganda measures itself, Col. Jaeski emphasized that the Centre is analyzing where NATO may not be hitting the mark – there is some concern that counter-narratives are not being expressed or heard. Another of the Centre's projects is examining NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan for lessons learned between 2006 and 2014 with respect to the messages that nations communicate at home.

A report on ballistic missile defence is also almost complete. Col. Jaeski noted that in terms of coordination, the various NATO Centres of Excellence have annual meetings where they examine overlaps and share information, sometimes combining projects where appropriate.

Meeting with Professor Andris Sprūds of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs

The delegation then met with Professor Andris Sprūds of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs to discuss the Eastern Partnership and regional security issues. Professor Sprūds highlighted what role Latvia will have to play during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, including setting the Council's agenda, organizing events and facilitating collaboration. He noted that concerns about Russian aggression are sure to form the backdrop for the Presidency. As such, the Eastern Partnership will be high on the Council's agenda. Many Central and Eastern European states are falling apart and becoming more individualized. Professor Sprūds cited a worrying opinion poll from Belarus, which indicated that faced with Russian aggression, less than 15% would defend Belarus, 20% would support the invading army, and 50% would simply accept the new regime. Nevertheless, Professor Sprūds recognized that Latvia must tread carefully. As further context, Professor Sprūds set out the primary features of the Eastern Partnership: to promote human rights, the rule of law and democracy; and to promote free or increased trade.

Professor Sprūds was asked about energy security and distribution in the region. He noted that Russia uses its pipelines to maintain a monopoly on energy supplies and to maintain influence in Europe. He noted that gas was more of a strategic tool for Russia, while oil was more about economics. One silver lining in Russia's monopoly on the gas supply is that it has been a good source of income for Ukraine as a transit country (contributing up to 10% of Ukraine's GDP). He emphasized that balance is important – Russian energy supplies are indispensable, but diversification is important, including transparent market relations and the ability to replace supply sources.

Responding to a question about a perceived re-establishment of the Russian Empire, he denied that this was the case, but said that it was a complex situation. He said that Russia has never been as united as it is now. In response to another question about Turkey, Professor Sprūds noted that Latvia supports Turkish membership in the EU but fears that instability in the region is pushing it away right now. He noted that energy projects in the area, such as South Stream, are likely to move forward, although there are obstacles, as well as incentives for working with Russia. Echoing comments from an earlier meeting, Professor Sprūds also noted that he did not think that Russia and China would ultimately establish too close a relationship, despite a recent rapprochement, as they were very different countries. Finally, in envisaging Russia, post-Putin, Professor Sprūds noted that Russia is a relatively democratic country and that there are other options for leadership available. Nevertheless, he said that President Putin is likely to remain in power for a long time yet. Russia is an interesting social phenomenon and it will be interesting to see what happens if President Putin's ratings ever fall.

Working Lunch with Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Roberts Zīle

The delegation attended a working lunch hosted by Ms. Stovel with a Latvian Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Roberts Zīle, member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group at the EU level and the National Alliance at the national level. Mr. Zīle

commented on Latvia's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, emphasizing the focus on the Eastern Partnership and the digital agenda. He said that some in Latvia are unhappy with the money being spent on the Presidency, but that others are encouraged with the increased attention, which is putting the small country on the map. He noted that his party and the European People's Party supported CETA. The idea of trade with the United States is of great importance to Latvia, and supporting CETA is an obvious first step towards this. CETA will be easier to achieve than TTIP, but it is possible that it will be used as a political tool to dissuade countries from moving forwards with TTIP – it will be important to avoid making automatic associations between the two. Mr. Tilson echoed a positive message about CETA, noting that it is a good thing for the EU, Latvia, Germany and Canada, and that it will even provide the EU with some access to American and Mexican markets. Mr. Zīle noted that there have been some political concerns expressed about the ability for genetically modified foods to enter the European market, but that this is not a reality – European standards will not be lowered through CETA. Ms. Stovel also emphasized that ISDS already exists in many contexts – CETA will simply be using that same capability.

Asked about the political parties in Latvia, Mr. Zīle emphasized that the National Alliance is a right-wing party. At the moment, the party is concerned about the sale of Latvian real estate to Russians, hoping to shift this trend from Russian investment towards Western investors. He also noted that the National Alliance is seeking to introduce Latvian as the only language taught in schools in an attempt to bring uniformity to the school system – not as an attack on minority languages. On this issue, he noted that there is some concern in Latvia right now that there are too many schools with too few children. This is very expensive for the state and results are poor, as the teachers are not paid enough.

On the issue of climate change and energy, Mr. Zīle noted that Latvia is a green country but would like to slow down on climate action. He said that Latvia is skeptical that the levels of reduction being sought are possible. He also noted that an energy union is high on the EU's agenda, but that different countries understand this concept differently. Asked about the possibility of one day buying energy from Canada, he responded that Latvia would likely be interested in Canadian liquefied natural gas, but there is less of a need for oil. Turning to the floating terminal recently built in Lithuania, Mr. Zīle noted that Latvia could not come to agreement on this terminal – the Baltic states are not fully united on energy issues – so does not have access to that supply, which is currently coming to Lithuania from Norway. Mr. Zīle ended with a discussion of Rail Baltica and Latvia's recent move towards a high speed train on a European gauge. Russia and other interests are against such a move – the battle is not over yet on this issue.

Meeting with Ms. Iveta Kažoka, Senior Policy Analyst at Providus

The delegation then held a meeting with Ms. Iveta Kažoka, a senior policy analyst with the think tank Providus, to discuss Latvia's priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Ms. Kažoka discussed the organization's most recent research project comparing EU member states, with particular emphasis on Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria and Czech Republic. Among its conclusions, this project found that Latvia was one of the most EU-integrated subject countries, with significant levels of optimism about the EU (although 30% of Latvia's population remained skeptical of the benefits that being a member of the EU entailed). She said that Latvia was currently experiencing good growth, and that many see the EU as providing benefits such as labour mobility, investment and agricultural subsidies, rather than focusing on the broader benefits that the EU represents, such as

common values, and peace and security. She highlighted the fact that Latvia currently has a low sense of empowerment at the EU, with the perception that Latvian MEPs are not being heard. However, she noted that Latvian MEPs are slowly gaining confidence, and that this perception will likely change with the Presidency. From this perspective, Ms. Kažoka highlighted a number of areas that Latvia may be able to work on in the coming months, including focusing on a stronger civil service that understands EU procedures, thinking about Latvia in a more strategic way at the EU, and getting more involved at the EU with policy suggestions. In response to a question from the delegation about how the Presidency works, Ms. Kažoka emphasized that Latvia's Presidency is part of an 18-month program developed in conjunction with two other EU member states (Italy and Luxembourg) – the three states together are known as a trio. Each country then focuses on individual priorities from that agenda depending on their skills and interests. Italy is currently focussing on institutional reform and Latvia will carry on that goal but with a digital twist. One priority does not die when a Presidency is over – the following country simply picks up that mantle. As such, Latvia is likely to do some work on Mediterranean issues following from Italy's Presidency. In choosing the digital agenda, Latvia drew from its strengths rather than relying on any more strategic planning. The idea of a digital union is not a new one, but it is one that Latvia has something to contribute to.

Meeting with Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The delegation's last meeting in Latvia was with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Ms. Inga Skujiņa, Under-Secretary of State for European Affairs; Ambassador Einars Semanis, Director General of the Bilateral Relations Directorate; Ms. Dace Rutka, the Head of the Americas and the Caribbean Division; Mr. Reinis Kalniņš, Third Secretary of the Americas and the Caribbean Division; and Mr. Artūrs Sviridovs, Canada's desk officer at the Americas and the Caribbean Division. Ms. Skujiņa commented on how Latvia is approaching its Presidency priorities, emphasizing that the country aims to learn more about the Council through its Presidency, and hope that it has the skills to guide its partners and pave the way for work together into the future. She noted the low voter turnout in the 2014 EU elections due to euroskepticism but hoped that such issues are behind them, highlighting the fact that the EU institutions managed to agree on a slate of new Commissioners with relative ease and that work programs are now in place. There is a current emphasis on increased inter-institutional cooperation and planning. Ms. Skujiņa noted that sometimes Presidencies can be distracted by a crisis of the moment and so cannot always implement their goals in the timeframe available, but the aim of the trio programme is continuity. Latvia will continue what Italy has started, with the recognition that issues such as migration from the south are less important to Latvia than the Eastern Partnership. The current aim is for "less paper, more deeds".

On Latvia's specific priorities, Ms. Skujiņa emphasized that "Competitive Europe" is about economic policy, efficiency and competitiveness; strengthening the European industrial base; focusing on climate policy; decreasing energy dependency and emphasizing on public-private partnerships. "Digital Europe" is about emphasizing trust between service providers and consumers within a single digital market; data protection and cyber security; and supporting jobs and competition. On the "Engaged Europe" priority, Latvia intends to work with the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy towards strong transatlantic relations that emphasize the economy and security; focus on the Eastern Partnership and Central Asian relations; and work on a renewed security strategy. She noted that despite euroskepticism, the overwhelming majority at the EU is pro-EU, so it should be possible to move forward rationally. Focusing on action rather than paper, and

realistic and tangible results, should help allay concerns. In this vein, one of Latvia's aims is to reduce bureaucratic language, and provide better explanations in order to better explain the benefits of the EU. Major reforms likely cannot be achieved during their presidency, but Latvia hopes to look for gaps and inefficiencies on a daily basis.

Ambassador Semanis turned the discussion to Latvian-Canadian relations, and noted that Latvia was very grateful for Canada's recent support through NATO. He said that Latvia currently has a good relationship with Canada at the diplomatic level and that economic cooperation is growing: a Canadian mineral exploration company has recently been looking into opportunities in Latvia, and Bombardier's relationship with Air Baltic is very important. Maybe it would be possible to have a training centre in Latvia or a capacity for building parts. He noted that a direct flight from Riga to Toronto was currently under discussion. On the issue of Latvian-Russian relations, Ambassador Semanis noted that there were clear tensions due to the situation in Ukraine. The European External Action Service needs to focus on this issue and signal the EU's clear displeasure to Russia. He noted that diplomatic channels were open and that there was always hope that a diplomatic solution could work. In terms of the Eastern Partnership, Ms. Skujiņa noted that Latvia is working hard to be realistic about events in the region and to work on relationships with those countries. Latvia wants to focus on an individual approach to Eastern Partnership countries. Commenting on the upcoming elections in Moldova, she noted that the polls indicated that the country was undecided – making the post-Communist transition is not easy.

Reception Hosted by the Canadian Embassy at the Small Guild

On the delegation's last night in Riga, the Canadian Embassy to Latvia, led by Ms. Stovel, hosted a reception for the delegation and many of the organizations and individuals that the delegation had met with throughout its mission. Ms. Stovel and Mr. Tilson made remarks highlighting the delegation's experiences during its week in Riga and the importance of Canadian-Latvian relations, as well as the benefits of such parliamentary missions. Mr. Tilson thanked Ms. Stovel for her warm welcome and the excellent programme that the Embassy had organized on the delegation's behalf, ending by wishing Latvia well as it takes the reigns of the Council of the European Union.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary mission to the European Parliament
DESTINATION	Brussels, Belgium; Berlin, Germany; and Riga, Latvia
DATES	November 10-20, 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michel Rivard; Senator Hon. Grant Mitchell, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. David Tilson, M.P. <i>Head of delegation</i> Mr. Corneliu Chisu, M.P. Mr. Don Davies, M.P. Mr. Scott Simms, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Guyanne Desforges, <i>Association Secretary</i> Ms. Laura Barnett, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$52,831.13
ACCOMMODATION	\$18,735.50
HOSPITALITY	\$4,608.88
PER DIEMS	\$10,103.20
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,066.85
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$87,345.56