

Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

**Statement by the Delegation of Canada to the OSCE
620th Meeting of the Permanent Council
18 July 2006**

**CURRENT ISSUES: SENTENCING OF BELARUSSIAN OPPOSITION
LEADER, ALEXANDER KOZULIN**

On 14 July, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Peter MacKay, condemned the sentencing of Belarusian opposition leader Alexander Kozulin to five and a half years in jail.

Minister MacKay denounced the unreasonably harsh sentence Mr. Kozulin received for exercising his democratic right to protest, referring to this as yet another example of the utter disregard the Lukashenko regime has for the democratic rights of the Belarusian people.

In the same way as the OSCE Chairman in Office noted in his statement on 14 July, Canada finds the handling of the alleged offences arising out of the aftermath of the March presidential elections gravely disturbing.

We are extremely concerned for the safety and security of Mr. Kozulin and other prisoners detained or sentenced on political grounds.

Mr. Chairman, Canada calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately release Mr. Kozulin and other political prisoners and to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Previously our Government had indicated the curtailment of our official relations with Belarusian authorities. On last Friday, Minister MacKay announced that Canada also intends to control all its exports to Belarus.

Canada will continue to work with likeminded countries to promote democratic change in Belarus.