

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

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
TALKING POINTS DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY
IN REPLY TO THE BELARUS STATEMENT UNDER "CURRENT ISSUES"
ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CANADA
859 MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
14 APRIL 2011**

Mr. Chairperson:

I wish to reply to the statement about Canada just raised under "Current Issues" by the Head of Delegation of Belarus, and have the following points to register:

First, I would like to thank Belarus for using the Permanent Council to raise important issues and concerns, because the Council is one of the instruments in our OSCE toolkit for conducting peer review and enabling us to hold each other to account in the implementations of our OSCE commitments and values. We do not agree with Belarus that our OSCE peer review targets countries "east of Vienna" is not only outdated, but untrue.

Second, Canada is open to having responsible, independent investigations and peer reviews, and outside assessments or reports by well known NGOs like Amnesty International.

Third, my Delegation is a bit surprised that Belarus has aired its long list of criticisms about Canada today under "Current Issues", because the cases flagged are not new or recent. So, we wonder that could have triggered this focus on Canada today.

Fourth, the Government of Canada has a strong, longstanding commitment to human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms. These are principles and values that are cornerstones of our democracy and foreign policy. They are enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1981) and through the implementation of our commitments within the United Nations and OSCE. Canada takes its human rights commitments and responsibilities very seriously, and we have been in the forefront of this in the CSCE-OSCE process, even hosting the first ever Human Dimension Conference in Ottawa in 1985.

Fifth, in terms of follow-up: my Delegation will provide a more detailed response to the issues concerning Canada that Belarus has raised today, but we intend to do so through the OSCE's Human Dimension Committee. Some of the cases are still subject of judicial investigations, or public enquiries. I also wish to reserve the right to return to this matter at a future Permanent Council session, if necessary.

Thank you/Merci.