

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

ENGLISH only

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION YVES BEAULIEU
CURRENT ISSUES: RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS IN BELARUS
885TH MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
27 OCTOBER 2011**

Mr. Chairperson,

Canada has serious concerns regarding the newly adopted legislative amendments by the Belarusian National Assembly in Minsk to the Law on Public Associations, the Law on Political Parties, the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Violations, and the Election Code.

These restrictive measures will further limit the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, as well as other fundamental human rights. The purpose of these amendments is clear: to further constrain – indeed silence – the voice of the people of Belarus.

Canada calls on President Aleksandr Lukashenka to uphold Belarus' international human rights obligations by refusing to give Presidential assent to the amendments, and to end the persecution of civil society, independent media, and political opposition.

Canada also deplores the Belarusian authorities' lack of respect for the right to freedom of speech and of expression, and will continue to call on Belarus to uphold democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as we expect from an OSCE participating State.

Mr. Chairperson,

Canada has long been an active proponent of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law – including freedom of assembly and association through various multilateral and regional organisations, including within the OSCE.

We value the important work of the OSCE in this field, and urge the OSCE Institutions and participating States to continue to hold the Government of Belarus to account on their systematic and unacceptable abuse of human rights in their country, which is in gross violation of what we all agreed to at the OSCE Astana Summit last year.

Thank you - Merci.