



news release

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CANADA SIGNS COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSFER OF SENTENCED PERSONS

The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, and the Honourable Bob Kaplan, Solicitor General of Canada, announced today that Canada has signed a Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons under the aegis of the Council of Europe. This Convention, when it comes into force, will enable Canadians serving long-term prison sentences in Europe to apply for repatriation to Canada to serve the balance of their sentences in Canadian penitentiaries.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General will be responsible for the implementation of arrangements under this Convention.

This Convention is the fourth international agreement concluded by Canada on this subject. Similar agreements are in force with the United States of America (1978), Mexico (1979), and Peru (1980). To date 93 Canadians have been transferred to Canada under these agreements. Agreements have been signed but not yet ratified with Bolivia, France, and Thailand. It is the first multilateral convention Canada has signed under the aegis of the Council of Europe.

Under the Convention, Canadians imprisoned in European countries parties to this Convention who so desire may apply to serve the balance of their sentences in Canada. The transfer of sentenced persons would take place only after all the rights of appeal had been exhausted in the sentencing country. No transfer would be initiated without the consent of the individuals

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concerned and would be subject to approval of both countries involved. The transfer of offenders programme promotes the rehabilitation of offenders by enabling them to serve the remainder of their sentences in the country of which they are nationals, close to family and friends.

At present there are 24 Canadians known to be in jails of member States of the Council of Europe.

Although Canada is not a member of the Council of Europe the Convention provides for accession by non-members. Canadian officials participated actively in the drafting of the Convention on the basis of Canadian experience in this area with other countries.

The Convention was signed on behalf of Canada in Strasbourg, France, the seat of the Council of Europe, on March 21, 1983 by the Canadian Consul General in Strasbourg, Mr. Jean-Yves Grenon. In addition to Canada, the countries that initially signed this Convention are Austria, Sweden, Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Belgium, Greece, Denmark, and the United States of America. Other member States of the 21 member Council of Europe are expected to add their signatures at later dates as permitted by the Convention.

The Convention will come into force following the expiration of three months after the date on which three member States of the Council of Europe have expressed their consent to be bound by the Convention. The Convention will come into force for Canada when it has entered into force in this manner and Canada has ratified it.

Inquiries on this Convention should be addressed to Consular Policy Division, Department of External Affairs, (613) 992-5313 or to the Special Assistant, Media, Ministry of the Solicitor General, (613) 996-0220.