

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

**Canadian delegation report concerning its participation at
the summer meeting of the Western Governors' Association
(WGA)**

Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

**Rapid City, South Dakota, United States of America
25–27 June 2018**

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 25–27 June 2018, Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury, M.P. represented the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) at the 2018 summer meeting of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) in Rapid City, South Dakota.

THE EVENT

The WGA includes the governors from 19 U.S. western states (see the Appendix), as well as from American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The Canadian premiers from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba also participate in the WGA's activities.

The WGA uses six basic strategies to achieve its goals:

- develop and communicate regional policy;
- serve as a leadership forum;
- build regional capacity;
- conduct research and disseminate findings;
- form coalitions and partnerships in order to advance regional interests; and
- build public understanding and support for regional issues and policy positions.

Each winter and summer, the WGA holds a meeting. This meeting was chaired by South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard, and was also attended by Governors Steve Bullock (Montana), Doug Burgum (North Dakota), Gary Herbert (Utah), John Hickenlooper (Colorado), Matt Mead (Wyoming) and Butch Otter (Idaho). Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe also attended.

Hawaii Governor David Ige has chosen biosecurity and invasive species as his focus for his year as WGA chair.

DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

The Canada–United States IPG aims to find points of convergence in respective national policies, to initiate dialogue on points of divergence, to encourage the exchange of information, and to promote better understanding among legislators on shared issues of concern. In addition to regular meetings with their federal counterparts, in recent years, members of the IPG's Canadian Section have attended national and regional meetings of governors. At these events, Canadian delegates engage in conversations that will help to achieve the Canadian Section's objectives, and to communicate various aspects of the bilateral relationship.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

During the 2018 summer meeting, the WGA held the following keynote addresses and roundtable discussions:

- U.S. Department of Labour Secretary Alexander Acosta (Keynote)
- Western Governors' Workforce Development Initiative (Roundtable)
- Technology Tools for Governors (Roundtable)
- U.S. Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson (Keynote)
- Wildfire's Environmental Challenges (Roundtable)
- U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke (Keynote)
- Philip Anschutz (Keynote)
- Battling the Opioid Epidemic (Roundtable)
- A Conversation with First Spouses.

As well, at the meeting, the WGA's governors adopted 12 policy resolutions that addressed the following topics:

- Air Quality and Methane Emissions Regulation
- Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States
- Enhanced Oil Recovery
- Water Resource Management in the West
- National Minerals Policy
- Transportation, Storage and Disposal of Radioactive Waste, Radioactive Materials and Spent Nuclear Fuel
- Cleaning Up Abandoned Mines in the West
- Water Quality in the West
- Workforce Development in the Western United States
- Energy in the West
- International Trade
- Modernizing Western Infrastructure.

This report summarizes the keynote addresses and roundtable discussions at the WGA's 2018 summer meeting.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Secretary Alexander Acosta, *U.S. Department of Labour*

- There is an opioid epidemic in the United States.
- According to a monthly unemployment survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 33% of unemployed men between the ages of 25 and 55 years had used a painkiller the day before they took a prescription painkiller.
- Governors need flexibility concerning the ways in which funding provided under the Workforce Innovation Act can be used; they should be able to fund the programs that are effective and needed in their states.

WESTERN GOVERNORS' WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Stuart Andreason, *Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta*

- It is important to cultivate "human" skills in schools and in the workplace.
- "Higher level" critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration skills cannot be replaced by robots; consequently, the development of these skills should be a focus.

Chauncy Lennon, *JPMorgan Chase & Co.*

- Investments in workforce development should be measured and recorded.
- Understanding the nature of workforce development investments, and their impacts, can be beneficial for employers, employees and communities, among others.

Jon Schnur, *America Achieves*

- In the past, a high school education enabled a person to have a middle-class lifestyle.
- Today, more than a high school diploma is needed in order to secure a "good" job.

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR GOVERNORS

Denise Pearl, *Google*

- There are no data problems; there are "search" problems.
- With Google's assistance, the National Prescription Drug Takeback Day resulted in more than 1 million pounds of prescription drugs being turned in.

Tamara Dukes, *NIC Inc.*

- Many people find the government to be both stressful and confusing.
- Often, individuals do not understand the distinctions between the local, state and federal levels of government.
- According to the results of a recent survey, 84% of 4,000 respondents said that dealing with the government is stressful.

Marquis Cabrera, *IBM*

- Currently, there is a fear that the United States does not have enough “cybersecurity talent” to protect Americans; many individuals with these skills move to other countries.
- There is a need to create more cybersecurity programs in order to develop a cyber workforce and cybersecurity initiatives within the United States.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Secretary Heather Wilson, *U.S. Department of the Air Force*

- The U.S. Air Force is a significant contributor to many economies.

WILDFIRE’S ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Sarah Greenberger, *National Audubon Society*

- Because of the spread of invasive species and grasses, the U.S. West is experiencing larger and more frequent rangeland fires.
- More scientific research and funding are required to tackle issues relating to wildfires.

Christy Plumer, *Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership*

- Stakeholders should work together to ensure adequate funding to address wildfires.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Secretary Ryan Zinke, *U.S. Department of the Interior*

- The United States’ regulatory framework needs to promote innovation and to embrace technology; it should also increase reliability, safety and environmental safeguards.
- A key issue for the future is infrastructure, and partnerships with vendors and states will benefit investments in parks.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Philip Anschutz, *The Anschutz Corporation*

- The U.S. West expanded rapidly between 1800 and 1920.
- The U.S. West's rapid expansion was characterized by innovation because of both the "seemingly endless" supply of land and the opportunity to improve one's "station in life," which facilitated attainment of the "American dream."

BATTLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Governor Gary Herbert, *State of Utah*

- About 25% of people who are prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them; in 2016, this proportion was equivalent to 11.5 million people.
- On average, an estimated 115 Americans die every day because of an opioid overdose, and more than 2 million Americans have an opioid-related substance abuse disorder.
- Between 8% and 12% of people develop an opioid use disorder when their doctor prescribes opioids for them.
- When considering the scope of the opioid crisis, the extent of illegal opioid use should also be considered.

Jennifer Stoll, *OCHIN*

- One key way in which to address the opioid crisis is through investments in infrastructure, including to ensure that medical providers can access broadband and high-speed Internet.
- Telehealth can expand access to behavioural health services.

Briana Duffy, *Beacon Health Options*

- In addressing opioid addiction, prevention should be one focus.
- Addiction treatment is the area in which the largest gap exists between science and clinical practice.

Joan Henneberry, *Health Management Associates*

- Faith-based entities, businesses and Tribal organizations need to be included when implementing solutions to the opioid crisis.
- Because of the broad range of addiction disorders, the right kind of infrastructure needs to be put into place.

- Priorities should include keeping people safe from infections and from overdosing, and helping them attain a healthy life.

Anne Hazlett, U.S. Department of Agriculture

- Rural communities are very affected by the opioid crisis; 90% of rural Americans believe that drug use is an issue in their communities.
- In rural communities, isolation, a lack of treatment services and inadequate broadband contribute to the opioid crisis.
- Because no two communities are the same, solutions must occur at the local level.

A CONVERSATION WITH FIRST SPOUSES

First Spouses from the states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah discussed their role in a gubernatorial administration and the opportunities that they believe exist because of their position.

First Lady Kathryn Helgaas Burgum, State of North Dakota

- The stigma of addiction should be eliminated.
- Eliminating the stigma of addiction would enable a health care system that creates a “wrap-around system” for addiction, like any other chronic disease.

First Lady Linda Daugaard, State of South Dakota

- Infant mortality is an important issue that must be addressed.
- In 2016, at 4.8 deaths per 1,000 births, South Dakota reported its lowest-ever rate of infant deaths; this rate represents a reduction of almost 50% since 2012.

First Lady Jeanette Herbert, State of Utah

- Everyone needs help parenting, and parents require answers to resolve their parenting “dilemmas.”
- Families can be strengthened through efforts to support positive parenting.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald,
Senator, Co-Chair
Canada–United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group

Hon. Wayne Easter, P.C., M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada–United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group

APPENDIX: U.S. STATES REPRESENTED IN THE WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Alaska

Arizona

California

Colorado

Hawaii

Idaho

Kansas

Montana

Nebraska

Nevada

New Mexico

North Dakota

Oklahoma

Oregon

South Dakota

Texas

Utah

Washington

Wyoming

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Western Governors' Association (WGA) Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Rapid City, South Dakota, U.S.A.
DATES	25-27 June, 2018
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury, M.P.
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	1,476.95
ACCOMMODATION	585.40
PER DIEMS	416.81
MISCELLANEOUS	2,633.32
TOTAL	5,112.48

