

Canada – United States  
Inter-Parliamentary Group  
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire  
Canada – États-Unis  
Section canadienne

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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting  
its participation at the 58th Annual Meeting and Regional  
Policy Forum of the Council of State Governments' Eastern  
Regional Conference (ERC)**

**Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group**

**Rye Brook, New York, United States  
5-8 August 2018**

# Report

## DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 5–8 August 2018, Senator Michael L. MacDonald, Co-Chair, led a delegation from the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) to the 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference (ERC) in Rye Brook, New York. The other members of the delegation were Mr. Kerry Diotte, M.P., Vice-Chair and Mr. Chandra Arya, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Tanya Dupuis, Advisor to the Canadian Section.

## THE EVENT

The ERC is a regional association of legislators from 11 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces (see the Appendix); Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are also members. By facilitating co-operation among its member jurisdictions, the ERC promotes multi-state or region-wide solutions to the problems and challenges facing the United States' eastern states and Canada's eastern provinces. Each year, the ERC holds an annual meeting.

The ERC's 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting had the theme of "States of Disruption."

## DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

The 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.

Members of the IPG's Canadian Section meet regularly with their federal counterparts and, in recent years, have attended regional and national meetings of governors and state legislators. At these events, Canadian delegates engage in conversations that help the Canadian Section to achieve its objectives.

At the ERC's 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, Canadian delegates discussed opportunities for Canada, especially its eastern provinces, and the eastern U.S. states to collaborate in a number of areas. Furthermore, they attended presentations on a variety of issues, including Canada–U.S. relations, renegotiation of the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA), the technology of autonomous vehicles, and the political outlook in the United States, particularly in the context of the 2018 midterm elections.

## ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

The following plenary sessions occurred at the ERC's 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting:

- Opening Plenary Session:
  - Clean Disruption of Energy and Transportation: How Silicon Valley is Making Oil, Nuclear, Natural Gas, Coal, Electric Utilities, and Conventional Cars Obsolete by 2030
- Luncheon Plenary Sessions:
  - Blockchain and Government: Understanding the Potential and Challenges of Blockchain
  - LeadHERship: The Status of Women in Politics
  - Outlook: The 2018 Midterm Elections and Beyond

- Farewell Breakfast: CTE in Football Players: A Looming Public Health Crisis.

The committee sessions were the following:

- Agriculture and Rural Development Committee:
  - Hemp: Crop of the Past, Now Crop of the Future?
  - Regional Updates in Agricultural and Rural Affairs
  - View from Washington: The 2018 Farm Bill and More
- Canada-U.S. Committee:
  - Regional Cooperation Beyond NAFTA
  - Whither NAFTA?
- Education Committee:
  - Civic Education and Student Involvement
- Energy and Environment Committee:
  - Creating a Sustainable Energy Future in the Northeast
  - Pathways to Promoting Zero Emission Energy Amid a System in Transition
- Health Committee:
  - ACA Chaos: What's Happening with State Insurance Markets?
  - Public Health and Public Safety: Cross-Sector Approaches to Address the Opioid Epidemic (jointly with the Council of State Governments' Justice Center)
- Military and Veterans Affairs Committee:
  - Military Service to Civilian Licensure and Credentialing
- Transportation Committee:
  - Funding and Financing Transportation Infrastructure.

Finally, policy sessions on the following topics were held:

- Autonomous Vehicles: Safety First
- Exploring Policy Solutions for Racialized Public Spaces
- Cybersecurity Redux: Solutions to Securing State Elections
- Immigration 101: Exploring the Challenges of Policy and Practice
- Creating Excellence in the Legislative Workplace
- #MeToo and Women in Politics
- Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands: The Long Road to Recovery.

This report summarizes the discussions that occurred at the plenary and selected concurrent sessions during the ERC's 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting.

## **BLOCKCHAIN AND GOVERNMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES OF BLOCKCHAIN**

**Victoria Adams, *ConsenSys***

- The Internet was not created for the purpose of safely and securely exchanging information and money.
- Blockchain technology could provide governments and businesses with a secure way to exchange money, personal information and other items of value.
- With blockchain technology, information is stored across a network of computers; consequently, the information is decentralized and it is almost impossible for

hackers to access the stored information, which is cryptographically protected and encrypted.

- Blockchain technology provides individuals with an opportunity to “own” their personal data, such as their medical records, and to choose both the information that they wish to disclose and the people or entities that they wish to receive it.
- Blockchain technology is expected to change the ways in which people and businesses share personal data and money.

## **IMMIGRATION 101 : EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF POLICY AND PRACTICE**

### **Claudia Calhoon, *New York Immigration Coalition***

- Immigrant communities in the State of New York are being affected by such issues as recent changes to the United States’ immigration policy.
- Because of Americans’ reaction to immigration, the crisis being faced by a number of immigrant communities in the United States is a political crisis.
- Among other actions, the Trump administration has put into motion a zero-tolerance policy for adults entering the United States illegally which calls for criminal prosecutions of those who have been caught doing so.
- A citizenship question that is expected to be added to the 2020 Census could discourage people from completing the Census, which would diminish the accuracy of the information that is collected.

### **Senator Carmelo J. Ríos Santiago, *Senate of Puerto Rico***

- Social media “rhetoric” has “taken over” the “narrative,” and Americans should listen to “the whole story” before passing judgment on immigrant communities.
- Immigrant communities are being victimized, and residents fear that immigration and/or legal repercussions will ensue if they speak out and report incidents to law enforcement agencies.

### **Mayor Toni Harp, *New Haven, Connecticut***

- Greater efforts are required to build relationships between immigrant communities and law enforcement agencies
- In New Haven, Connecticut, police officers are proactively working to increase trust between law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities.

### **Superior Court Judge Erika Tindill, *State of Connecticut***

- In certain instances, immigrants in the United States are forgoing their legal rights, fearing that they will experience negative immigration-related consequences if they choose to proceed with a court case.
- In addition to “building bridges” between law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities, American legislators should proactively seek ways to encourage and value the contributions made by the immigrant communities in their region.

## **WHITHER NAFTA?**

### **Laura Dawson, *Wilson Center***

- Canada– U.S. trade relations are in a period that might be characterized as “unprecedented.”

- Historically, the United States and Canada have had a “great” trading partnership because businesses – not governments – undertake trade.
- The renegotiation of NAFTA is complex because of the trilateral nature of the agreement; the renegotiation is extremely important to all three countries.
- Canada and Mexico will not accept a NAFTA that is not beneficial to each of them.

**Mark Warner, *MAAW Law***

- Certain businesses are hoping that a renegotiated NAFTA would “level the playing field” by establishing clear and concise trading rules.
- Concerning NAFTA, the current state of uncertainty is creating difficulties for businesses that are required to know and understand ever-evolving trading rules.

**Khawar Nasim, *Global Affairs Canada***

- NAFTA has been a “tremendous” success; trade among Canada, the United States and Mexico has tripled since the agreement came into force.
- NAFTA has created an integrated economy between Canada and the United States, where goods are easily accessible; it is expected that a renegotiated NAFTA would provide the same accessibility.
- Additional efforts should be made to communicate, to the United States, the benefits of the Canada–U.S. trade relationship.

**CLEAN DISRUPTION OF ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION: HOW SILICON VALLEY IS MAKING OIL, NUCLEAR, NATURAL GAS, COAL, ELECTRIC UTILITIES, AND CONVENTIONAL CARS OBSOLETE by 2030**

**Tony Seba, *Author***

- Employees consistently fail to predict forthcoming technological disruptions; for instance, individuals employed by Kodak did not predict that the firm’s camera would be disrupted by digital imaging technology.
- A technological disruption occurs when many key technologies converge; for example, land lines were disrupted by innovations regarding digital imaging, smart phones and touch screens.
- Within the next five years, technological changes that could be considered “disruptive” will occur in the energy and transportation sectors.

**Patty DiOrio, *National Grid***

- The United States’ National Grid was well-designed and is constantly being modernized.
- The United States believes in the science of climate change and understands the associated challenges.
- The conversion of heating sources from oil to natural gas is under way.

**John Rhodes, *New York State Public Service Commission***

- The State of New York continues to prepare for the change in energy resources.
- The State of New York wants to change the future of energy, and has both allocated appropriate resources and developed required policies.

**Michael A. Tamor, *Arizona State University***

- Electricity will play a key role in changing the future of energy.
- In the future, electricity consumption is expected to increase threefold; governments should prepare for this higher demand.

### **LeadHERship: The Status of Women in Politics**

#### **Molly Ball, *TIME* and *The Atlantic***

- Historically, in the United States, women have been elected to public office at the same rate as men; however, not enough women choose to be electoral candidates.
- During the 2016 U.S. elections, more female candidates were seeking political office than had been the case in previous years; it is unclear whether, in future, women will continue to seek public office to the same extent that they did in 2016.

#### **Kimberly Peeler-Allen, *Higher Heights for America***

- In politics, women are treated differently than men, and they need to be prepared for this reality.
- It is important for women in politics to “stay true to themselves.”

#### **Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long, *State of Delaware***

- Gender does not determine competency; the focus should be whether a particular person is the right candidate for the job in question.
- Mentors should have a good “political sense” and they should be from different organizations.

#### **Representative Themis Klarides, *Connecticut House of Representatives***

- Many black women have overcome the challenges associated with being discouraged from running for political office
- Women running for political office, and those in political office, need to have greater confidence in their abilities.

### **AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES: SAFETY FIRST**

#### **David Strickland, *Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets***

- Most motor vehicle accidents are due to distracted driving and human error; with autonomous vehicles, driver error as a cause for such accidents could be eliminated.
- Autonomous vehicles could help senior citizens and individuals with disabilities retain their autonomy.
- Consumer acceptance of autonomous vehicles is a hurdle that needs to be addressed.
- Citizens need to trust the technology of autonomous vehicles before they will “buy into it.”

#### **Roger Cohen, *Pennsylvania Autonomous Vehicle Policy Task Force***

- In the United States, the legislative and regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles has not yet been developed.

- Because the U.S. Congress has not yet legislated in relation to autonomous vehicles, the U.S. states have an opportunity to do so.

**Representative Ruth Briggs King, *Member of Delaware Advisory Council on Connected and Autonomous Vehicles***

- Common questions that need to be addressed with respect to autonomous vehicles include whether the driver or the vehicle should be held responsible for an accident, and whether a human should be present in the vehicle.
- There is a need to develop a legislative and regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles.

**Paul Godsmark, *Canadian Automated Vehicles Centre of Excellence***

- Autonomous vehicles are expected to be as “big” as the Internet.
- Once the technology of autonomous vehicles is developed, it could be used with any “platform,” including shuttles and buses.
- An autonomous vehicle can learn from the “mistakes” made by other autonomous vehicles, and can adapt accordingly.

**REGIONAL COOPERATION BEYOND NAFTA**

**Dan Ujcz, *Dickinson Wright PLLC***

- Regardless of the outcome of the renegotiation of NAFTA, the relationship between Canada and the United States will continue to exist.
- A bilateral trade agreement between the United States and Mexico will soon be announced.
- Despite regulatory cooperation efforts between Canada and the United States, difficulties with the cross-border movement of workers continue to exist.
- The NAFTA renegotiation process provides an opportunity to discuss impediments to the cross-border movement of workers.

**Dan Kolundzic, *Binational Research & Innovation Corridor***

- Innovators strategically place themselves along the Canada–U.S. border.
- Two business incubators located along the Canada–U.S. border – SPARK and TREC –facilitate the cross-border mobility of workers.

**David Slack, *Bombardier***

- The Canada–U.S. relationship, workforce mobility, regional cooperation, and the movement of goods across the border between Canada and the United States are critical issues for a number of businesses.
- For any given project, businesses may have multiple supply chains.
- In a competitive market, it is extremely difficult to “manage” a design that depends on the cross-border flow of goods and movement of workers.

**PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS: THE LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY**

**Jeff Nowill, *Office of U.S. Representative Stacey E. Plaskett***

- Puerto Ricans and residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands feel that the federal responses to Hurricanes Irma and Maria were inadequate; logistical shortcomings

continue to exist and, one year after the hurricanes, there is still much work to be done.

- Many citizens of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands believe that the federal efforts to rebuild are insufficient, and that citizens will be inadequately prepared for the next hurricane.

#### **Senator Myron Jackson, *Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands***

- The U.S. Virgin Islands comprise a very small territory with a population of just over 100,000 people.
- The U.S. Virgin Islands' health services were completely decimated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
- U.S. presidential disaster declarations for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are still in effect; 86% of the homes on these islands were directly affected.
- Because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the U.S. Virgin Islands' electrical grid was destroyed and the education system was disrupted; students are continuing to go to school outside of the territory or to be educated in temporary modular classrooms set up by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Hurricanes Irma and Maria decimated the U.S. Virgin Islands' tourism sector, leading to about 5,000 job losses.
- The U.S. Virgin Islands are encouraging community healing, and are treating post-traumatic stress disorder through the arts.
- The U.S. Virgin Islands are working to build their resilience.

#### **Senator Carmelo J. Ríos Santiago, *Senate of Puerto Rico***

- In July 2018, roughly 2,000 Puerto Ricans were still without electricity following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
- Applications for compensation from FEMA in relation to Hurricanes Irma and Maria could only be completed on the Internet, which created logistical challenges for Puerto Ricans.
- Of the more than 1 million applications for assistance from FEMA that were completed by Puerto Ricans, 61% were denied for reasons of insufficient damage or lack of title deeds.
- Puerto Rico needs to build its resilience to climate change.

#### **Carlos Mercader, *Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration***

- The amount of devastation in Puerto Rico resulting from Hurricanes Irma and Maria could not have been foreseen.
- Because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Puerto Rican "community" had to "come together" for the first time.

#### **Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, *New York State Assembly and New York Stands with Puerto Rico Rebuilding and Reconstructing Committee***

- The rebuilding of Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Irma and Maria will lead to "great" economic investment opportunities.
- Puerto Rico's tourism sector is continuing to rebuild.

#### **OUTLOOK: THE 2018 MIDTERM ELECTIONS AND BEYOND**



**David Wasserman, *The Cook Political Report***

- During the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, a “tale of two battlegrounds” between the rural states and the suburban states is anticipated.
- Republicans are expected to “lose” the 2018 midterm elections, but to retain control of the U.S. Congress.
- During the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, the Democrats would need to win 7% more votes than the Republicans to regain control of the House of Representatives.
- Voters’ opinions regarding President Donald Trump and their vote are closely correlated.
- President Trump’s disapproval rating among women and men who have a college degree is 71% and 56%, respectively; women with a college degree are likely to vote in the 2018 U.S. midterm elections.

**CTE IN FOOTBALL PLAYERS: A LOOMING PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

**Chris Nowinski, *Concussion Legacy Foundation***

- Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a degenerative brain disease that is believed to be caused by repetitive brain trauma; first defined in 1928 as “punch drunk syndrome,” it was a common condition among boxers
- Prior to 2005, there were 45 reported cases of CTE, all of which involved boxers.
- In 2017, a neuropathologist examined the brains of 111 deceased National Football League players; of those, 110 were found to have CTE
- According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 3.8 million concussions occur each year, with one in six being diagnosed as such; CTE is often undiagnosed.
- Everyone shares responsibility for ensuring that athletes involved in all types of sporting activities reach their full potential.

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**

### **MEMBER OF THE U.S. STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS' EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

Connecticut

Delaware

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

New Hampshire

New Jersey

New York

Pennsylvania

Rhode Island

Vermont

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are also members.

### **MEMBER CANADIAN PROVINCES OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS' EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

New Brunswick

Nova Scotia

Ontario

Prince Edward Island

Quebec

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	58th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference (ERC)
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Rye Brook, New York, United States
<b>DATES</b>	5-8 August 2018
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Michael L. MacDonald, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Chandra Arya, M.P. Mr. Kerry Diotte, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Tanya Dupuis, Analyst
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 3,735.74
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 5,505.27
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 913.66
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$ 2,055.80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 12,160.47</b>