



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting  
its participation at the Parliamentary Meeting on the  
Occasion of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations  
Commission on the Status of Women**

**Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

**New York, New York, United States of America**

**March 12–14, 2019**

# Report

## Introduction

A Canadian delegation participated in the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York from 12 to 14 March 2019. The delegation's activities focused primarily on the parliamentary meeting organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women (the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women), held on 13 March 2019. The Canadian delegation also participated in several side events on 12 and 14 March 2019.

## The Canadian delegation

The Canadian delegation comprised the following parliamentarians:

- the Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator
- Ms. Eva Nassif, Member of Parliament
- the Honourable Kim Pate, Senator

The delegation was accompanied by its advisor, Dominique Montpetit.

## Participation of the Canadian delegation in the Parliamentary meeting organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The theme of the parliamentary meeting organized by the IPU on 13 March 2019 was *Investing in gender equality: Parliaments ensuring social protection, public services and infrastructure deliver for women and girls*, which complemented the priority theme of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. The parliamentary meeting dealt mainly with the following key subjects:

- recognizing gender-responsive social protection policies;
- ensuring that public services and infrastructure are responsive to the needs of, and accessible to, all women; and
- ensuring that public spending on social protection, public services and infrastructure is gender-responsive.

This IPU meeting brought together parliamentarians from national and regional parliaments, as well as representatives of governments and international and non-governmental organizations. The sessions provided Canadian parliamentarians with an opportunity to learn more about the impact that social protection policies, public services and infrastructure can have on the empowerment of women. They also heard about the efforts of other countries, UN Women and IPU member parliaments to create social protection systems, provide public services and build gender-responsive infrastructure.

The meeting was opened by Ms. Susan Kihika, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, and Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, IPU President. All three stressed the importance of ensuring adequate social protection, public services and infrastructure that meet the needs of women.

Following the first session, the Honourable Paddy Torsney, Permanent Observer of the IPU to the United Nations, presented the results of the latest IPU study on the representation of women in politics. In January 2019, women represented 24.3% of parliamentarians and 19.7% of the Speakers of Parliaments worldwide. Ms. Torsney indicated that the results of the 2018 study show that the type of electoral system used has an impact on the number of women elected. In addition, according to the results of the study, the number of female heads of state and female ministers has increased since 2017. Ms. Torsney also presented some factors that, according to IPU research, can negatively impact on women's access to elected positions. These include electoral systems, political parties, political will, cultural norms and violence against women.

### **A. Session 1: What do gender-responsive social protection policies look like?**

The first session focused on mechanisms to ensure that all women are considered in social protection systems. The panelists were:

- Ms. Christina Behrendt, Head of the Social Policy Unit, International Labour Organization;
- Ms. Ingrid Van Niekerk, Executive Co-Director and Senior Researcher, Economic Policy Research Institute, South Africa;
- Mr. Yasir Naqvi, Former Attorney General, Province of Ontario, Canada; and
- Mr. Johnson Sakaja, Senator, Kenya.

The panelists discussed different social protection policies and emphasized that these policies must take into account the specific needs of women. First, Ms. Christina Behrendt commented that, although social security is a human right, many individuals currently enjoy little or no social protection. She explained that a range of measures can be used to ensure that social protection policies reach women, including supporting women's organizations, addressing gender inequalities, investing in gender-responsive protection systems and developing the capacity of governments and their partners to create and implement such systems, as well as collecting data on inequalities.

Ms. Ingrid Van Niekerk focused on the concept of universal basic income and the integration of a gender perspective in its implementation. She presented examples of universal basic income initiatives from around the world. According to Ms. Van Niekerk, it is important to emphasize that universal basic income is only a starting point and that it does not replace other government initiatives and programs. She also explained the importance of collecting data and measuring the impacts of universal basic income programs.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi then presented Ontario's Basic Income Pilot Project. This pilot project, which was intended to benefit individuals with low-incomes aged 18 to 64 living in certain

targeted regions, provided participants with a minimum monthly income. Mr. Naqvi indicated that the Government of Ontario planned to measure the impacts of the pilot project in terms of the ability of recipients to meet their basic needs and improve some social indicators. <sup>1</sup>Note: participants were enrolled in the program in April 2018; the Government of Ontario ended the pilot project as of 31 March 2019.

Finally, Mr. Johnson Sakaja explained that several gains in social protection for women are now protected by Kenya's constitution and laws (including those relating to breastfeeding and food security).

### **1. Intervention of the Canadian delegation**

Following the presentations, the delegates participated in an open debate on the subject.

The Honourable Marilou McPhedran noted one theme that had emerged from the panelists' presentations: the importance of evaluating initiatives and their impact on women. She asked the panelists if gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) had been taken into account in the development and evaluation of the initiatives they presented.

### **B. Session 2: Ensuring public services and infrastructure are responsive to the needs of and accessible to all women**

The topic of the second session was the specific infrastructure needs of women, and measures that can insure that infrastructure meets these needs. The panelists were:

- Ms. Azzouha El Arrak, Member of Parliament, Morocco;
- Ms. Karla Dominguez, Gender Task Force for Transportation, World Bank; and
- Ms. Zuleika Frost, Youth Speaker, National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

The panelists focused on public services and infrastructure that could meet the specific needs of women. First, Ms. Azzouha El Arrak spoke about the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in advancing gender equality, including the role that parliaments can play in reforms advancing social security and care, and in preventing violence and discrimination against women. Next, Ms. Zuleika Frost stressed the need for health-related infrastructure – such as that providing access to safe drinking water and reproductive health care – to meet the needs of women and girls. She argued that such infrastructure investments can contribute to gender equality. Finally, Ms. Karla Dominguez explained that men and women use public transport differently, which is why it is important to include women in discussions and consultations on this subject.

Following the presentations, the delegates participated in an open debate on the subject.

### **C. Session 3: Parliament's role in ensuring the money allocated to social protection, public services and infrastructure advances gender equality**

The topic of the third session was the integration of the gender perspective into budgetary and fiscal processes. The panelists were:

- Ms. Zohra Khan, Policy Advisor on Governance and National Planning and Acting Chief of the Leadership and Governance Section, UN Women;
- Ms. Alejandra Noemí Reynoso Sánchez, Senator, Mexico; and
- Ms. Helena Bouveng, Member of Parliament, Sweden.

The panelists presented several ways to integrate a gender perspective and gender equality into financial and fiscal decisions. First, Ms. Zohra Khan explained that gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can help determine whether financial resources have been allocated fairly. According to Ms. Khan, parliaments play a crucial role in the implementation of GRB, as they can propose changes to governments' budgetary proposals. Ms. Khan also presented indicator 5.C.1 of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) developed by UN Women to measure the integration of GRB into states' public financial management systems.

Next, Ms. Alejandra Noemí Reynoso Sánchez presented a project called "youth embassies," which is a youth participation mechanism whereby youth-led causes are identified and then considered for public policy development by the Senate of Mexico. She explained that the gender dimension is integrated into several of the themes addressed by the "youth embassies."

Finally, Ms. Helena Bouveng explained that despite reforms that have enhanced gender equality in Sweden, there is still a gap between women's and men's employment rates and wages. She noted that statistics, laws and gender mainstreaming can be used to reduce and eliminate these gaps. Ms. Bouveng also stressed that the impacts on gender equality should be addressed at all stages of the budget process.

### **1. Intervention of the Canadian delegation**

Following the presentations, the delegates participated in an open debate on the subject.

The Honourable Senator McPhedran explained that section 2 of the *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act* (the *Act*) sets out Canada's gender budgeting policy, which involves in particular promoting gender equality in the annual federal budget and considering gender and diversity factors in taxation and resource allocation decisions. The Senator clarified that the *Act* does not mention the SDGs, although indicator 5.C.1 of the SDGs is directly related to monitoring the implementation of gender budgeting. She asked the panelists if parliamentarians could do more to integrate the SDGs into their work.

A report of the meeting will be made available on the IPU website.

### **Participation of the Canadian delegation to side events**

On 12 and 14 March 2019, the Canadian delegation participated in several side events organized at the United Nations on the occasion of the 6<sup>3rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The topics of these meetings included social protection systems, services for individuals who are lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex, women's empowerment and violence against women.

### **A. Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians**

The informal meeting on *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians* was organized by the Council of Europe, the IPU and the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations. The panelists were:

- Liliane Maury Pasquier, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President, IPU;
- Päivi Sillanaukee, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland;
- Charles Ramsden, Chair, Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe;
- Dubravka Šimonović, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; and
- Purna Sen, UN Women Spokesperson on Addressing Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination.

Attendees were told that sexism, harassment and violence against women are rampant in politics. According to the results of a study on sexism, harassment and violence against women in European parliaments carried out by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in collaboration with the IPU, approximately 68% of survey respondents indicated that they had been subject to remarks about their physical appearance or based on gender stereotypes. The presenters emphasized that violence against women and harassment are human rights violations and a threat to equal opportunities.

The panelists also stressed that parliaments must set an example and respond to sexism, harassment and violence against female parliamentarians. That includes having internal policies to end violence against women in their spaces. In particular, the panelists noted, it is important that the steps for reporting violence or harassment be made public and that everyone know how to speak out about these situations.

According to the panelists, the bodies that oversee mechanisms for monitoring international instruments on women's rights, such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, could address issues related to violence against women in politics and women in public spaces more systematically in their work.

Panelists noted that men and boys play an important role in the fight to eliminate sexism, and that the issue of sexism should be addressed in school curricula.

## **B. From Critical Mass to Gender Parity—Women in Decision-Making Do Make a Difference!**

The side event entitled *From Critical Mass to Gender Parity—Women in Decision-Making Do Make a Difference!* was organized by the permanent missions of Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, Albania and Canada, as well as UN Women and the IPU. The panelists were:

- Her Excellency Penelope Beckles, Ambassador of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
- the Honourable Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President, IPU;

- the Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Minister of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji;
- the Honourable Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council, Namibia; and
- Ms. Hanna Kristjánsdóttir, Senior Advisor on Women's Leadership, UN Women.

The objective of this panel was to demonstrate why achieving parity in leadership positions is important for achieving gender equality. The panelists stated that women in leadership positions can help to eliminate gender stereotypes and encourage women to become involved in politics. They stressed that democracy must be representative and misogyny must be denounced. Gender-responsive parliaments can attract more female parliamentarians. In addition, gender equality laws are needed to ensure the equality of all people.

### **C. Data on Women in Politics: Getting to Equal?**

The side event entitled *Data on Women in Politics: Getting to Equal?* was organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the IPU, in collaboration with UN Women. The panelists were:

- the Honourable Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President, IPU;
- the Honourable Paddy Torsney, Permanent Observer to the United Nations, IPU;
- Ms. Julie Ballington, Global Policy Advisor on political participation, UN Women;
- Ms. Nathalie Amoratti-Blanc, Member of Parliament, Monaco; and
- Ms. Susan Kihika, Senator, Kenya and IPU President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

Participants heard that although there has been a 0.9% increase in the number of female parliamentarians worldwide over the past year, men continue to hold approximately 75% of seats in parliaments worldwide. UN Women is currently developing indicators to measure the representation of women in local politics.

Some panelists argued that the introduction of quotas is an effective way to increase women's representation in parliaments. For example, the quota and reserved seat system can provide women with opportunities to demonstrate their competence and skills, after which women can compete for elected seats.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., M.P.

President

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

## **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the 63rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DESTINATION</b>	New York, New York, United States of America
<b>DATES</b>	March 12-14, 2019
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator Hon. Kim Pate, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Eva Nassif, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Dominique Montpetit, Analyst
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$ 4,082.80</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$ 4,773.45</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 2,060.92</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 11,048.17</b>