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## **Report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas**

**11<sup>th</sup> Gathering of ParlAmericas Gender Equality Network and  
the 48<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas**

**Mexico City, Mexico**

**June 18-20, 2019**

## **Report**

### **Introduction**

From 18–20 June 2019, the Honourable Robert Nault, P.C., M.P., President of ParlAmericas and Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas\*, attended the 11<sup>th</sup> Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality in Mexico City, Mexico. The meeting, which was focused on women's economic empowerment, was attended by parliamentarians and subject matter experts from 22 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean.

### **Meeting of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors**

The 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas took place ahead of the Gathering, on 18 June 2019. In his capacity of President of ParlAmericas and Chair of the meeting, Mr. Nault delivered welcoming remarks along with Senator Antares Vázquez of Mexico, who hosted the meeting. Routine procedural motions were moved and adopted; this included adoption of the agenda and the minutes from the previous Board meeting.

Mr. Nault delivered the President's Report which highlighted ParlAmericas' different areas of progress and recent activities including the delegation of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas to Brazil. Board members also reported on the activities of ParlAmericas' three thematic networks: the Open Parliament Network (OPN), the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), and the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change (PNCC). An overview was also provided on the thematic focus for the 16th Plenary Assembly to be held in Asunción, Paraguay.

During the board meeting updates were also given by the finance committee. Director General Alisha Todd additionally provided the report of the International Secretariat, that included work plans and progress reports, financial updates, and proposals related to human resources. Deputy Director Anabella Zavagno provided an update on the ParlAmericas Regulations review.

Due to time constraints, it was proposed by the Chair, Mr. Nault, that the update on the Climate Neutral Initiative and the explanation of the new core project planning process, both with reference documents included in the Board meeting documents, be provided by the Director General and Deputy Director to Board members on an individual basis over the course of the Gathering or by phone as needed.

### **Training Session: Frameworks to prevent and address Workplace Sexual Harassment**

In the afternoon of 18 June 2019, the first activities carried out in the framework of the Gathering were held (separate workshops in English and Spanish). These examined the problem of workplace sexual harassment as an obstacle to human rights and gender equality. The sessions provided an overview of the relevant legal principles and different types of relevant national legislation from the region. The sessions also encouraged participants to consider how the good practices discussed could inform the development of protocols or codes of conduct to prevent harassment within legislative institutions.

The English session was delivered by Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh, Director of Legal Services of the Equal Opportunity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. In this session, participants from Canada and the English-speaking Caribbean shared information about their countries' national legislation, policies and practices that help to prevent and address sexual harassment in places of work including parliamentary institutions.

Mr. Nault shared good practices from Canada, including the new parental leave program which will allow all Members of Parliament, regardless of their gender, to take up to a year away from the chamber without penalty.

The session in Spanish was delivered by Ms. Lucía Martelotte, Deputy Executive Director of the Latin American Team for Justice and Gender (ELA, in Spanish). In Latin America, in addition to specific laws on sexual harassment, the issue has been addressed in labour laws or codes, general laws on violence against women, anti-discrimination laws, and penal codes.

The training sessions furthermore explored voluntary practices that parliamentarians can champion to promote cultures of respect and wellbeing for all employees, and to achieve greater productivity, morale, and equality in their places of work. Participants considered how #MeToo and other social movements are advancing critical conversations that are creating progress towards greater accountability and justice.

## **Inauguration**

On 19 June 2019, Senator Vázquez, as host of the 11<sup>th</sup> Gathering of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), and the Honourable Robert Nault, P.C., M.P., President of ParlAmericas and Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas, provided opening remarks to officially inaugurate the meeting.

Senator Vázquez Alatorre said that important legislative advances have been made in all of the countries of the region, but many gaps remain for the fulfilment of women's equality. She stated her confidence that the continued dialogue would allow for the construction of a common path forward.

In his remarks, Mr. Nault commented that women's empowerment in the workforce is an urgent priority in its own right, and that it is also the smartest engine for achieving development, growth, and prosperity for our countries. He said that family-friendly taxation policies, paid maternity and paternity leave, affordable childcare options, and frameworks that promote more balanced working lives more generally can all play significant roles in making gender-equal work opportunities a reality, which benefits all members of society.

## **Report from the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality**

Cristina Norma Cornejo, who is a member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador and Vice-President–Central America of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, presented a report on the PNGE's activities since the previous year's gathering, which included various meetings and delegations, as well as the launch of a new project supported by Global Affairs Canada which ParlAmericas is undertaking to accompany civil society organizations dedicated to women's political participation. Ms. Cornejo also shared some of the highlights of the Network's upcoming work which will include meetings and the publication of toolkits and other knowledge resources.

## **Session 1: Recognizing Women's Labour: The Care Economy**

The Gathering's first session focused on the care economy and its relationship to women's economic empowerment. During the session, panellists and participants explored parliamentary actions to respond to these issues, including: enhancing social protection systems; quantifying, valuing, and redistributing household care work; and ensuring the rights of women care workers, particularly those in the informal sector.

Julia Escalante de Haro, Regional Coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM), opened the session with an introduction to key concepts and trends related to the care economy. She highlighted that women undertake the majority of care work – mostly in an unpaid capacity – and that this burden influences their ability to access and remain in quality paid employment. When women are employed in paid care work, Ms. Escalante de Haro explained that it is often in more precarious roles. Women in paid care work are also more likely to be self-employed in the informal sector, which means less social protection and job security. Further, care workers in such a setting are more susceptible to violence, discrimination, and a lack of recognition of labour and human rights. Ensuring adequate support and protections to workers in these situations requires intersectional considerations, as migrant women and women from other more vulnerable social groups are more likely to be employed informally.

In her presentation, Member of the Legislative Assembly Shirley Díaz Mejías of Costa Rica discussed two key laws that have been adopted in Costa Rica: Law 9325, which initiated national measurement of non-remunerated household care work through the National Statistics and Census System, and Law 9220, which created a National Child Care and Development Network. She also highlighted the importance of time use data to inform the creation of responsive policies and programs, and of considering and responding to related issues in the context of the broader economy, as fluctuations and crises can influence the public's need to seek employment in different sectors or under different terms.

President of the Senate of Grenada, Chester Humphrey, shared that increased attention was now being paid to recognizing and supporting unpaid household care work, but that Grenada had advanced most in terms of ensuring adequate support and protections for paid care workers, which he attributed to partnerships with and advocacy by trade unions. He outlined provisions in the labour code and social security legislation specifically related to domestic workers, and said that further efforts would be taken to strengthen legal protections in the context of the country signing on to the ILO's Domestic Worker's Convention.

Mexican Senator Verónica Camino Farjat spoke to important initiatives to expand parental leave to include time for fathers following the birth of a child. She also advocated for not just capturing unpaid care work in data, but assigning it a value that could be accepted for credit provision or in the case of asset division if a couple separates, in recognition of the ways women are disadvantaged if their work has primarily been in the home. She stressed that true progress on any of these issues will require that legislation be supported by an accompanying focus on education and communication that fosters leadership for girls from a very young age.

Following the panel, participants engaged in productive conversation and shared additional good practices related to recognizing and supporting care work, domestic work, and social protection systems to achieve gender equality.

## **Session 2: Unfinished Business: Laws to close the gaps on Women's Economic Rights**

In the second session, Beatriz García of UN Women provided an overview of a new study, *Analysis of Discriminatory Legislation on Women's Economic Autonomy and Empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean*, published with the Ibero-American General Secretariat. The study illustrates how discriminatory legislation affects women's economic empowerment, as well as examples of national laws contributing to closing the identified gaps. The laws examined are divided into three categories: access to goods and resources, access to remunerated work, and non-remunerated work. Ms. García noted that removing the direct and indirect forms of legal discrimination revealed by the study is a crucial step towards substantive equality.

Next, Member of the National Assembly Arelys Santana Bello of Cuba spoke about advances that have been made in her country. In Cuba, there has been substantial progress on women's participation in certain sectors, such as STEM and the public service, whereas there is still lower participation in non-state – or private sector – jobs which is a nascent area of the economy. Ms. Santana spoke about the national survey on gender equality (2016), which captures sex-disaggregated data on many indicators, including attitudes towards woman and men, primary economic challenges, and time use and child care.

The Honourable Member of Parliament Dr. Kellie Leitch from Canada, in attendance as a guest speaker, then presented initiatives that have helped to lessen the workplace inequalities faced by women, Indigenous people, disabled persons, visible minorities, and newcomers to Canada. She shared the example of the Employment Equity Act, which set a foundation that required special measures and the accommodation of difference. Dr. Leitch then explained how employment insurance provisions, such as paid parental leave and compassionate (end of life) care benefits, have improved women's economic circumstances over the years. She additionally described government programs for women entrepreneurs and for mentorship in non-traditional sectors. Other good practices highlighted were related to flexible work schedules, which allowed more mothers to seek employment; campaigns surrounding International Day of the Girl; and strong enforcement mechanisms. Finally, Dr. Leitch stressed the need to establish clear and transparent timelines for bold new ideas that parliamentarians put forward to challenge the status quo.

Member of the National Assembly of Nicaragua, Maritza Espinales, presented on a series of laws that protect women's economic rights in her country. Ms. Espinales also described a number of programs in related areas like food security, literacy, housing, and credit for small enterprises. She explained that these efforts align with the National Human Development Plan (2018-2021) and are contributing to macro and micro economic benefits. However, she noted that implementation and resourcing remain challenges. Ms. Espinales lastly highlighted women's representation in public institutions, an area where Nicaragua is a global leader.

In the dialogue after the panel, participants reflected on the work that remains to be done. A recurring discussion point was on the role of women's movements and manifestations in driving forward change, as they have created an obligation for society – and parliaments – to respond to economic and other inequalities.

### **Session 3: Capitalizing on Windows of Opportunity: Women and the Future of Work**

The third session of the gathering explored how technology and emerging markets are changing the nature of work, and the resulting challenges and opportunities for achieving gender equality. In the context of our rapidly shifting economies, panellists reflected on preparing women and men for the jobs of the future, including through technical training, financial literacy, and mentorship, as well as policies that support work-life balance.

In her presentation to frame the session, Member of the Chamber of Deputies Camila Vallejo of Chile reviewed the implications of increasing automation, digitalization, and flexibility for the workforce. She cited global and regional data on the displacement of workers by technology and explained that, due to their concentration in low skill work, women face a higher risk of their jobs being automated. She also drew attention to the growing reliance on contractors who take on specialized, temporary roles requiring intrinsically human skills: creativity, persuasion, complex problem solving, and innovation, among others. Providing examples from her country, Ms. Vallejo emphasized the importance of thoughtfully designed regulations and measures to ensure that workers can benefit from new technologies and flexible forms of work, and that gender inequalities are not perpetuated in the changing economy.

Ms. Isiuwa Iyehen from UN Women Multi Country Office for the Caribbean then presented on labour and education trends for women and men in the Caribbean, drawing on data from 2017 Labour Force Surveys in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The analysis revealed that, while most of the population is only reaching secondary education, women in CARICOM are more likely than men to have tertiary education. However, the employment rate is lower for women than men at every level of education. Women are also overrepresented in clerical positions and underrepresented in trades and machine-oriented work. Ms. Iyehen highlighted that persistent structural inequalities in the workforce mean that access to education alone will not address the gender inequalities in employment and wages and likelihood of experiencing gender violence.

Ms. Diana Gutiérrez from UNDP next presented on “gendering” the fourth industrial revolution, through the lens of the private sector. She reviewed some of the occupations in decline in the region as well as emerging areas for employment. Ms. Gutiérrez explained that a gender perspective is important in the further growth of these areas, as there is a risk of bias transfer in the development of algorithms and machine learning. She also concluded that not enough is currently being done to train workers for these fields, especially in relation to women's participation, despite a strong business case for such a focus. She explained that UNDP's Gender Equality Seal program seeks to recognize businesses that adopt commit to promoting gender equality and empowering women in their workplaces.

Ms. Sophia Bryan, Leadership and Business Development Strategist from Jamaica, explained that her capacity building work with entrepreneurs and leaders stemmed from

her desire to help create an ecosystem that supports women's development and allows them to thrive in business and formal employment. Ms. Bryan presented on barriers that currently exist to this goal in the Jamaican context. She encouraged the adoption of transformational leadership models that focus on fostering confidence, an understanding of and ability to clearly communicate one's value, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. Employers and political parties alike can actively promote the participation of women and youth in their spaces – and in doing so, ensure that it is not only those from privileged background who are able to access opportunities. Accessible programming can also be promoted to strengthen financial literacy and management skills, mentoring, and wage negotiation.

#### **Session 4: Discussion Tables: Exploring Data, Building Solutions**

The final session provided an in-depth look at different policy topics through working groups facilitated by Member of the Legislative Assembly Cristina Cornejo. To begin, Ms. Teresa Guerra, Program Associate at UN Women – Mexico, presented on the importance of gender-disaggregated data for the design of inclusive public policies and political decision making.

Participants then worked in roundtables to exchange on the following topics: pay equity, gender quotas for private and public organization, care centres, social protection and pensions for older women, and maternity and paternity leave. Each table was accompanied by a subject matter specialist who shared further data from the region and policy considerations. Participants discussed how the topic at their table has been undertaken in their country, sharing good practices and experiences. They also spoke about what would be at risk if the topic is considered in a gender-blind way. They noted the type of data that is required to inform effective, sustainable lawmaking on these topics, and the possible barriers to the collection and use of such data. Lastly, they reflected on the role of parliamentarians in addressing these challenges and strategic partnerships that could be leveraged to make further progress.

#### **Presentation of Final Declaration**

The meeting's host, Senator Vázquez Alatorre, presented the final declaration for the 11<sup>th</sup> Gathering of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, accompanied by Mr. Nault. The main commitments outlined in the declaration were the following:

- Reviewing the status of international conventions for gender equality in the labour force, including ILO conventions pending ratification, and taking steps to harmonize legislation in line with State agreements
- Identifying provisions in national laws that directly or indirectly present obstacles to women's economic empowerment and consulting with women's organizations to close the gaps
- Advocating for the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data for all legislative decision-making
- Taking steps to strengthen social protection systems, ensuring that they are guided by principles of universality, co-responsibility, and gender equality

- Initiating or supporting actions to institutionalize an anti-sexual harassment policy that is appropriate for the parliamentary precinct

### **Results of Elections for Vacant Positions on the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality**

Director General Todd announced the results of the elections for positions on the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality.

### **Closing Remarks**

Senator Antares Vázquez and Mr. Nault provided concluding remarks to close the 11<sup>th</sup> Gathering of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, indicating that the Gathering affirmed that women's economic empowerment is a priority for the region, and that the exchanges through ParlAmericas will add great value to the work carried out by parliamentarians moving forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Rosa Galvez, Senator  
Vice-Chair  
Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

*\*Mr. Robert Nault was Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas until September 2019.*



**Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Gathering of ParlAmericas Gender Equality Network and the 48 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Mexico City, Mexico
<b>DATES</b>	June 18-20, 2019
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Robert D. Nault, P.C., M.P.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 1,966.51
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 571.26
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 313.40
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS/ REGISTRATION FEES</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,851.17</b>