

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Western Governors’ Association Annual Meeting

Vail, Colorado, United States of America

June 10-12, 2019

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 10-12 June 2019, the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) was represented at the 2019 summer meeting of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) by Senator Jane Cordy, Vice-Chair of the IPG, and Senator Percy Downe. The meeting was held in Vail, Colorado. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Tanya Dupuis, Advisor to the Canadian Section.

THE EVENT

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) includes the governors from 19 states (see the Appendix) in the Western United States, 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.
- Build public understanding and support for regional issues and policy positions.

The WGA holds a meeting each winter and summer. The June 2019 meeting was chaired by Hawaii Governor David Ige and was also attended by Governors Kate Brown (Oregon), Doug Burgum, WGA Vice Chair (North Dakota), Mark Gordon (Wyoming), Michelle Lujan Grisham (New Mexico), Lourdes Leon Guerrero (Guam), Gary Herbert (Utah), Laura Kelly (Kansas), Brad Little (Idaho), Kristi Noem (South Dakota), Jared Polis (Colorado), and Steve Sisolak (Nevada).

Governor Ige chose biosecurity and invasive species as his focus for his year as WGA chair. The focus of the chair's initiative was to examine the effects that nuisance species have on ecosystems and watersheds and the role that biosecurity plays in addressing these risks.

Governor Burgum will be the WGA chair for the coming year; Governor Brown will be the vice-chair. Governor Burgum has chosen *Reimagining the Rural West* as his Chairman's initiative for 2020.

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, members of the Canadian Section of the IPG have attended national and regional meetings of governors in recent years.

At these events, Canadian delegates engage in conversations that help to achieve the Canadian Section’s objectives, and to communicate various aspects of the bilateral relationship.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

The WGA held the following keynote addresses and roundtable discussions during the 2019 summer meeting:

- Connecting the Rural West (Roundtable)
- Craig Johnson (Keynote)
- Eric Boechler (Keynote)
- Frank Luntz (Keynote)
- Robert Katz (Keynote)
- Meet the New Western Governors
- Update: Governors’ Policy and Business Section
- U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary David Bernhardt (Keynote)
- U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson (Keynote)
- Utilizing Data and Forecasting in Western Water Management (Roundtable)
- Western Governors’ Biosecurity and Invasive Species Report (Roundtable)
- Western Governors’ University (Keynote)

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

- Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management
- Federal-State Land Exchanges and Purchases
- National Parks and the West
- Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat

This report summarizes selected keynote addresses and roundtable discussions that took place during the meeting.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Secretary David Bernhardt, *U.S. Department of the Interior*

- The National Park Service plays a crucial role in the preservation of U.S. national parks.
- National parks are extremely important to communities that depend on tourism.
- The federal government is making efforts to work with state governments to keep U.S. national parks open during federal government shut down periods.
- National parks are in dire need of work and the U.S. National Park Service is experiencing a \$12.6 billion-dollar maintenance backlog; a solution has been proposed that the revenue generated from activities on U.S. public lands be used towards infrastructure enhancements.
- The U.S. Department of the Interior is being reorganized. To better serve Americans, the possibility of moving public servants from Washington D.C. to regional offices is being considered; this would allocate more resources to the front lines of the department.
- The complexity of the hunting and fishing regulations is impeding public access to the sport and as a result, the U.S. Department of the Interior will be increasing ease of access to public lands by creating new fishing and hunting opportunities.
- The U.S. Department of the Interior has announced that hunting and fishing will be expanded to wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries currently managed and operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Considering how concerning this year's wildfires were, the federal government is looking into wildfire disaster response and vegetation management measures to reduce the likelihood of wildfires. This is being done in collaboration with the Western Governors' Association, through a new memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Increased collaboration and communication is needed between federal and state level governments regarding wildfire management.

WESTERN GOVERNORS' BIOSECURITY AND INVASIVE SPECIES REPORT

Hawaii Governor David Ige, *Western Governors' Association Chair*

- The WGA chair's initiative was launched in July 2018 and the first-year report was released at the June 2019 summer meeting.

- Workshops and webinars were held throughout the year to engage stakeholders and western state governors, in view of identifying challenges and finding innovative solutions.
- The exchange of ideas during the workshops and webinars have shaped the final report containing several findings and policy recommendations.

Elizabeth Brown, *Colorado Parks and Wildlife*

- Invasive zebra and quagga mussels entering western states' waters are creating devastating effects on aquatic ecosystems.
- The zebra and quagga mussels are small and depart waterbodies by attaching themselves to the bottom of watercrafts.
- Originally found in the Great Lakes, the invasive mussels have spread to the Mississippi river and have cost billions of dollars in damage.
- When control methods are not used, the invasive mussels impair public access to waterbodies and disrupt the aquatic ecosystem. Zebra and quagga mussels are also known to clog intake pipes and disrupt hydro facilities.
- The control and management of invasive species such as the zebra and quagga mussels fall under the jurisdiction of the states.
- In 2012, a western regional panel started a multi-year process to resolve the ambiguous legal framework concerning water decontamination; a gap analysis was conducted in view of creating a more cohesive legal framework.
- A new Colorado state law enacted in April 2018 focuses on a multi-level approach to address invasive species which includes mandatory inspections and decontamination of watercrafts.
- The new Colorado law empowers the state to order the decontamination of a watercraft and when the boat owner is non-compliant, law enforcement can impound and quarantine the watercraft. This zero tolerance multi-level approach has yielded impressive results even though the state continues to intercept zebra and quagga muscless coming in from other jurisdictions.

Libby Yranski, *National Marine Manufacturers Association*

- Recreational boating is very popular in the United States as over 95% of the boats in the country are "trailer able" and under 26 feet long.
- Invasive mussels can hide and stick in very small and inaccessible areas of a boat and its trailer.

- It is possible to modify the manufacturing process of boats and trailers so that they are not as “friendly” to aquatic invasive species.
- The National Marine Manufacturers Association offers a checklist on its website to educate Americans on how to inspect their watercraft and decontaminate their boat and trailer.
- At the federal level, the National Marine Manufacturers Association is monitoring legislation and making sure that it is being consulted and included in legislative discussions.
- The National Marine Manufacturers Association created a boating and fishing coalition to ensure that all stakeholders speak unanimously on federal and state policy issues related to aquatic invasive species.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Robert Katz, *Vail Resorts Inc.*

- Outdoor recreation activities are critical to western states.
- American consumers will spend \$88.7 billion dollars annually on outdoor recreation, creating approximately 7.6 million jobs for Americans.
- Particularly, American consumers will spend \$7.3 billion dollars annually on snow sports and will yield close to \$8.4 billion dollars in annual revenue to ski resorts.
- The ski industry is currently facing challenges related to climate change and weather variability because of changes in temperature, snowfall amounts and water droughts.
- Other challenges to the ski industry include a lack of infrastructure to accommodate its exponential growth; more people can afford to go skiing since the unemployment rate in western states is very low and this has led to an increase in consumers and a need for enhanced infrastructure.

CONNECTING THE RURAL WEST

Chad Rupe, *United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development*

- The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development is trying to provide a greater quality of life to its citizens through enhanced access to broadband services.
- 23 million Americans living in rural areas lack access to advanced broadband services.

- There is a similarity between the lack of broadband access today and the lack of telephone telecommunications access in the past.
- Trying to connect the wide-open spaces of the western states is laced with challenges; more people need to come forward and create partnerships to overcome these challenges.
- Access to broadband can be improved by increasing private investments.
- The *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* includes funding for technology and access to broadband programs in rural areas.
- In 2018, the United States Department of Agriculture launched a new high-speed internet program in rural America.
- High-speed internet is a modern-day necessity that is essential to all Americans.

Ray Timothy, *Utah Education and Telehealth Network*

- The Utah Education and Telehealth Network (UEN) is seeking to improve access to technology and improve healthcare and education within the state.
- The lack of a telehealth network in rural hospitals is very costly.
- UEN is helping educators and teachers do video teleconferencing with other teachers from across the state and is allowing students to complete their homework through Internet access.

Bruce Patterson, *Technology Director City of Ammon, Idaho*

- The city of Ammon, Idaho is a small residential community best known for its Internet package prices.
- The Ammon model is based on “fiber utility”. In accordance with this model, the fiber, as opposed to the Internet, is the utility.
- Ammon’s “fiber utility” is based on “open access wired Internet infrastructure”.
- The city installs and maintains the fiber optic wire which in turn, allows Internet service providers to compete to sell their service through the wire.
- City residents opt in and must pay for the initial residential connection.
- The cost of the connection will vary depending on how many residents have opted in.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Frank Luntz, *America in Conflict: Healing the Divide*

- The United States is a divided country, and the most obvious example of this is the partisan divide between the Republican and Democratic parties.
- Americans are divided on issues that are important to them, such as healthcare and immigration.
- The latest polls indicate that since the 2016 elections, 49% of teenagers have stopped speaking to a family member or friend over a difference of opinion.
- America has reached a level of “ugliness” that has not been seen since 1968; politicians are speaking to each other in a manner that would not be tolerated in any other profession.
- It is extremely important for politicians to remember that most outcomes are not determined by what a politician says but by what the voters hear in the political arena.
- When giving a speech, politicians should remember to always be hopeful and inspiring.
- The language and words of a political address should be as visual and inspiring as possible and laced with specific examples.
- Governors seeking re-election and wanting to communicate effectively with voters should consider removing certain words or phrases from their vocabulary and embracing more effective words (see Appendix B).

UTILIZING DATA AND FORECASTING IN WESTERN WATER MANAGEMENT

Forrest Melton, *NASA Western Water Applications Office*

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) applied sciences program is using mapping technology to help foresee extreme weather conditions and collect data on water resources.
- The rapid assessment of extreme weather events such as flash floods or droughts can be done through combined visible imaging of incoming data and measurements.
- NASA is currently working in partnership with other organizations to fill gaps in satellite data information.

Jay Jasperse, *Sonoma Water*

- Sonoma Water’s successful management of water reservoir operations is due to its partnerships. In partnership with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), it manages river flows and water supplies from two reservoirs.

- USACE is tasked with releasing water from the reservoirs as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Due to climate change, water reservoirs play a more important role today than in previous years.
- The performance of water reservoirs has been improved by using weather forecasting operations from previous years. As a result, Sonoma Water and USACE can now predict when to conserve water and keep it in the reservoirs to help during drought season.

Lynn Budd, *Wyoming Office of Homeland Security*

- The Office of Homeland Security is better able to predict potential flood and melt zones by utilizing data and weather trends from previous years.
- Various Federal and State level partners include USACE, various state agencies, the National Weather Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Eric Boechler, *Illicit Fentanyl in Canada*

- Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid drug that is approximately one hundred times more powerful than morphine.
- Fentanyl is used legally in hospitals by most anesthesiologists.
- The illicit drug market in Canada continues to see the widespread of fentanyl.
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has observed the staggering growth of illicit fentanyl imports from China.
- Illicit fentanyl packages are coming in from China through Canada's international mail centre. The packages are small – approximately 50 to 150 grams – because they are easier to hide.
- The current price of pure fentanyl is \$12,000 a kilogram, one kilogram can create one million tablets with a street value of \$20 to 40 per tablet.
- Drug dealers are selling the fentanyl tablets at a low cost to make it more accessible to users, to get users addicted, and to make more money in the long run.
- No other drug comes close to the profit ratio offered by fentanyl.
- The staggering growth of illicit fentanyl on the black market has had a harrowing human cost.

- In 2018, the following Canadian provinces experienced their highest rate of overdose deaths:
 - British Columbia: 1,155 deaths
 - Ontario: 1,031 deaths
 - Quebec: 300 deaths
- The widespread use of fentanyl has required law enforcement and first responders to re-examine emergency response protocols.
- RCMP officers are instructed to presume that a substance found on scene is fentanyl and to obey protocol.
- Narcan and Naloxone will reverse the effects of a fentanyl overdose and many law enforcement agencies, including the RCMP, are trained and equipped with Naloxone kits.
- The presence of fentanyl dust is extremely dangerous to everyone including law enforcement; most police officers carry two kits with them on patrol in case of accidental exposure.
- The RCMP does not focus its law enforcement efforts on drug users but on drug traffickers and importers.
- The RCMP is the first police agency in the world to train drug detection dogs to recognize fentanyl.
- Various Canadian health initiatives include a take home Naloxone program as well as supervised consumption and safe injection sites operated by government health agencies.
- The production of fentanyl through clandestine labs has grown significantly in the last years.
- Clandestine fentanyl labs are extremely dangerous and must be quarantined and destroyed; their sites remain hazardous for years.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Western Governors University

Mike Leavitt, *Governor of Utah*

- The Western Governors University (WGU) is a competency-based model of higher education.

- WGU's online educational advance started in 1997. It was first created with funds from the state, the private sector investors and philanthropists; it is now being sustained entirely through tuition fees.
- The WGU was created out of necessity and urgency; the higher education learning model at the time was no longer sustainable and was plagued with issues related to affordability and access.
- The goal was to create a higher education model that would not fall under the existing education budget and that would not compete with that existing education model.

Roy Romer, *former Colorado Governor*

- Students were graduating with enormous amounts of debt and something had to be done.
- The WGU is an education model that is accessible and of high quality.
- There are currently 115,000 students enrolled at the WGU with an average age of 37 years.

Scott Pulsipher, *Western Governors University*

- 145,000 students have graduated from WGU since 1997.
- Over 70% of the student body fall within the category of first-time college graduate and/or visible minority.
- There are different types of faculty members at WGU, including curriculum designers, professors and evaluators.
- The current curriculum is specifically designed to meet the workforce needs of today and tomorrow.
- Currently, more than 50% of students enrolled in online WGU courses will complete their degree; WGU hopes that this number will rise to 60% by 2025.
- On average, 90% of the graduates find full-time employment in their field of study.
- It is said that 97% of WGU graduates have met or have exceeded their employer's expectations.
- WGU is following the fast pace of innovation by creating working laboratories like those found at the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* and Caltech Institute in order to catalyze higher education needs.
- WGU has launched an academy of learning for incoming students that is based on the premise "learn how to learn".

- WGU keeps tuition fees down and makes higher education more accessible.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Ben Carson, *U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development*

- The United States is in the middle of a great economic revival with individuals coming off food stamps and looking for first time employment.
- Unfortunately, the country is still experiencing problems with affordable housing for Americans.
- More must be done to encourage responsible home ownership.
- In 2017, the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* established “opportunity zones” across the country to foster economic revitalization and create more jobs.
- President Trump, by way of an executive order, is providing tax incentives to encourage private investments in low-income communities.
- Cities across the country are now developing “opportunity zones,” including in Oklahoma and Indiana.
- According to Zillow, property sales in “opportunity zones” have increased by 20%.
- With his executive order, President Trump wants to ensure better use of public funds to revitalize “opportunity zones”.

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 A:
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

Appendix B

Words to Use	Words to Lose
Inclusion	Diversity
Cleaner, safer, healthier	Sustainability
Impact	Change
Doing better	Doing more
To Educate	To inform
Mutual Respect	Tolerance
Together	One

Economic Words to Use and Lose	
Words to Use	Words to Lose
Economic Freedom	Capitalism
A Healthy Economy	Economic Growth
Hardworking Taxpayers	The Middle Class
A Career	A Job
Results/Solutions	Metrics/Answers
Innovation	Ingenuity
Personalized	Customized
A problem-solver	A leader

General Words to Use and Lose	
Words to Use	Words to Lose
A Plan of Action	Agenda
I am your voice	I'm listening
Accountability	Transparency
Setting Priorities	Making Tough Decisions
Fact-Based	Evidence-Based
Everyone Benefits	Everyone wins/Win-Win
Human Talent	Human Capital
Commitment	Promise

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Western Governors Association (WGA) Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Vail, Colorado, United States
DATES	June 10-12, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Jane Cordy Hon. Percy Downe
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Ms. Tanya Dupuis
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 9,525.97
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 3,844.65
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,673.46
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 3,750.10
TOTAL	\$ 18,794.18