

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

**59th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum of the
Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States of America

July 28-31, 2019

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 28-31 July 2019, Senator Michael L. MacDonald, Co-Chair, led a delegation from the Canadian section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) to the 59th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference (ERC) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The delegation also included Senator Percy Downe and Mrs. Brenda Shanahan, M.P. It was accompanied by Mr. Alexandre Lavoie, Advisor to the Canadian Section.

THE EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The ERC is a regional association of legislators from 11 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces (see Appendix); as well as from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. 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.

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.

At the ERC's 59th Annual Meeting, delegates from the Canadian section of the IPG attended presentations and engaged in discussions on a variety of issues with U.S. State legislators, including Canada–U.S. relations, the ratification of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement and the political outlook in the United States.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

The main theme of the Annual Meeting was “Healthy States”. The agenda of the meeting was developed to “address the concept of health across a wide range of topics, including issues such as maternal health & the social determinants of health, strengthening workforce development programs essential to healthy state economies, and the fiscal health of our states.”¹

Specifically, delegates attended plenary sessions held on the following topics:

- The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation
- Creating a Strong Workforce to Build a Strong State Economy

¹ Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference, [2019 CSG/ERC Annual Meeting & Regional Policy Forum Business Program Agenda](#).

- Social Determinants of Health
- Not Business as Usual: Riding the New Media Wave
- Adult Use of Cannabis: What's Missing in the Discussion?
- Creating Cultures of Health

In addition, delegates attended and participated in the following policy sessions:

- Canada-U.S. Relations Committee: Roundtable on Common Issues and Comparative State and Provincial Legislative Processes
- Rural Broadband: Bridging the Connectivity Divide
- Canada-U.S. Relations Committee: NAFTA/USMCA: Progress on Negotiations
- Census 2020: State Efforts for a Complete Count

Delegates also attended a reception held by the Consulate General of Canada in New York and met privately with Mrs. Phyllis Yaffe, Consul General of Canada in New York.

The following summarizes the discussions that occurred during relevant plenary and policy sessions held at the ERC's 59th Annual Meeting.

A. The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation

Darrell M. West, Vice President of Governance Studies and Director of the Center for Technology Innovation, The Brookings Institution

M. West spoke about the risks and opportunities that new technologies will have on the labour market and the policy responses needed from governments. According to him:

- New technologies are changing the economy and the way businesses operates. Artificial intelligence will allow the automation of new economic sectors, such as food services and retail. This creates new opportunities, such as:
 - relieving workers from the most boring tasks; and,
 - improving work-life balance.
- The implementation of artificial technologies in these sectors would also create challenges. For example, certain tasks will become obsolete, not just at entry level jobs but also at high-level jobs. Certain technological changes will also create regional disparities as many of the jobs associated with these technologies are concentrated in certain regions.
- If measures are not taken to address these challenges, many people may feel that they are being left behind by the new economy, which in turn may aggravate social tension and individual anxiety.

- Governments must ensure that the right policies are in place, notably that continuous education is available to workers to allow them to acquire new skills and/or to help them with a career change when needed.

B. Creating a Strong Workforce to Build a Strong State Economy

Plinio Ayala, President and CEO, Per Scholas; Lee Branstetter, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University; Meg Cortezi, Executive Director of Government Services Vertical, TEKsystems; John McElligott, CEO of York Exponential, President of the Fortress Initiative and the Fortress Academy

The four panellists participated in a question and answer session on how states can ensure their workforce is ready for the new economy.

- The impact of new technology on the workforce:
 - Artificial Intelligence improves and facilitates individual education. **(Branstetter)**
 - There is a need to retool the workforce to allow workers to benefit from the opportunities brought by new technologies. **(Ayala)**
 - More people need to learn about science, technology, engineering and mathematics – and enrol in these fields – not only in higher education institutions, but also early in schools and in technical colleges. **(Cortezi)**
 - Workers in many small communities risk not benefiting from new technologies because investments in these technologies are concentrated in larger cities. **(McElligott)**
- The impact of new technologies on education:
 - For the same reason that high school education was one of the best public investments during the Industrial Revolution, there is now a need to invest in continuing education to prepare workers for the deployment of new technologies. **(Branstetter)**
 - There is a need for employers to recognize the skills that employees have acquired outside the formal educational system. **(Cortezi)**
 - Colleges need to adapt their program faster to provide future workers with the technological skills they will require. **(Ayala)**
- Funding workforce adaptation:
 - Businesses should be playing a role in funding continuing education for their workers. That said, they have little incentive to do so considering how mobile some workers are. A solution might be the funding of continuing

education by employers and employees in a manner similar to employment insurance. **(Branstetter)**

- New technologies and employment discrimination:
 - Regional disparities may arise in certain communities where workers may be disproportionately impacted by new technologies. In these communities, new opportunities will need to be created for impacted workers. **(Ayala)**
 - The deployment of artificial intelligence technologies is likely to affect everyone, including highly skilled workers. **(McElligott)**

C. Social Determinants of Health

Abdul El-Sayed, MD, PhD, *Physician; Epidemiologist; Public Health Advocate; former Health Officer for the City of Detroit*

Dr. Sayed made a presentation – based on his experience as a former Health Officer for the City of Detroit – regarding the social factors that make peoples healthy.

- Four social features of a community shape the health of their residents: the level of poverty, inequality, racism and collective equity.
- These social features shape the health of individuals differently depending on their race, religion, income wealth, education and social standing.
- To improve public health in a community, we can:
 - Improve the community social well-being through education and employment.
 - Improve people’s health behaviour – at the community level – to counteract negative community influence regarding unhealthy behaviours.
 - Improve neighbourhood infrastructure to facilitate accessibility to healthcare and other community services.

D. Adult Use of Cannabis: What’s Missing in the Discussion?

The panellists discussed cannabis legalization in Canada and in certain U.S. States, and gave their insights on aspects that states considering cannabis legalization should think about.

Jameson Berkow, *Cannabis Business Reporter, The Globe and Mail*

- The legalization of cannabis in Canada required coordination between the federal and provincial governments.

- The Canadian cannabis industry is dominated by men; there is therefore an opportunity for governments to encourage better gender representation in the industry.
- Tensions remain between legalization vs. legitimization of the cannabis industry. For example, banks remain reluctant to provide financing to businesses in that industry.

Andrew Freedman, *Co-Founder and Senior Director, Freedman & Koski*

- It's easy to underestimate how much work and time it takes to put everything in place to legalize cannabis. Well-functioning licensing, inventory control and testing processes are essential when implementing an efficient cannabis industry.
- There is a need for collaboration between regulatory and law enforcement agencies, otherwise law enforcement may be neglected.
- Many jurisdictional gaps remain in U.S. States where cannabis is legalized because the federal government does not recognize cannabis legalization. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has no standards for the use of pesticide in cannabis production.

Jessica Velazquez, *Board Member, Minority Cannabis Business Association*

- In the United States, cannabis legalization is often accompanied with programs – called social equity program – aimed at using revenues generated from the cannabis industry to help communities that were previously disproportionately impacted by the enforcement of laws prohibiting cannabis.
- Cannabis producers often fail to adhere to the commitments in their social equity programs because the costs of starting a cannabis production business are very high and there is no money left for such programs.
- In states where cannabis has been legalized, Indian tribes generally have the authority to regulate the use of cannabis in their communities. In some cases, this has proven to be very successful because the regulations reflect the community needs and that tax revenues from cannabis is reinvested in the community.

E. Creating Cultures of Health

The panellists shared their experience improving health services in two communities that won the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize.

Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, *Community Development Director for the City of Lawrence, Massachusetts (2015 RWJF Culture of Health Prize Winner)*

- Building a healthy community requires policy and systemic changes in many domains, such as:

- transportation, to ensure safe and efficient access to various services;
 - housing, to ensure that city planning allows for the development of affordable housing options;
 - public infrastructure, to ensure residents have access to infrastructures that support health (i.e., parks, sports facilities, libraries); and
 - public safety, to ensure members of the community feel safe.
- It is important to identify early in the process of building a healthier community the leaders who will ensure that the work undertaken continues in the long term.

Bob Stephens, Garrett County Public Health Officer, Director, Garrett County Health Department, Maryland (2017 RWJF Culture of Health Prize Winner)

- Coordination among all stakeholders is essential to build a healthy community. To do so, bringing people from different agencies and organizations to work in the same space is useful.
- Such a coordinated approach helps people stop thinking about health issues in isolation and breaks silos between agencies.

F. Canada-U.S. Relations Committee: Roundtable on Common Issues and Comparative State and Provincial Legislative Processes

The roundtable discussion focused on certain common issues impacting U.S. state and Canadian provinces. It was chaired by Quebec MNA Guy Ouellette, Co-chair of the ERC Canada-U.S. Relations Committee. The following points were raised during the meeting:

- It is difficult to obtain approval from U.S. states for the construction of electricity transmission lines from Quebec to New England States.
- There is a need to adopt measures to ensure water quality in certain lakes straddling across the Canada-United States border in southern Quebec.
- The duties imposed by the United States on certain softwood lumber products from Canada have negatively impacted the economy of certain regions within Canadian Eastern provinces.
- Some administrative procedures and requirements can impede the crossing of the Canada-U.S. border, such as the process for certifying goods and the use of biometric information.
- Cannabis legalization: there is a lack of uniformity between U.S. states, which increase administrative burden on the industry. The fact that cannabis users may have difficulties crossing the Canada-United States border was also raised.

G. Rural Broadband: Bridging the Connectivity Divide

The panellists discussed the impact of the lack of high-speed Internet in rural areas and proposed solutions to address the issue.

Cat Blake, Policy & Program Manager, Next Century Cities

- Not only does broadband Internet access help deliver better health services, it also raises educational outcomes, facilitates workforce development, increases real estate value and strengthens public safety.
- One solution to increase broadband Internet availability would be for rural municipalities to own the broadband infrastructure; that could allow these municipalities to provide high-speed Internet at a better cost than major telecommunication companies.
- To increase broadband Internet availability, Governments could also:
 - offer grants to build broadband infrastructure;
 - map Internet access to locate areas that are lacking broadband Internet access;
 - set Internet speed standards; and
 - implement policies that facilitate the installation of broadband infrastructure on existing one.

Tom Coverick, Managing Director, KeyBank Municipal Broadband Practice

- The final connection between a network and a residence is the most significant cost of providing broadband Internet.
- There is no interest from the private sector to invest in broadband Internet access in remote communities at the present time. For that reason, the public sector must be involved in developing broadband Internet infrastructure.

Craig Settles, Industry Analyst, Speaker, Author

- Broadband Internet access in the United States is dominated by monopolies and duopolies.
- The numbers of cooperatives created to provide broadband Internet access has increased in the last three years.
- Public ownership of broadband infrastructure could remove barriers for small businesses to provide broadband Internet access.

- Moving to wireless broadband Internet access – or alternatively hybrid wireless and fixed access – could help lower infrastructure costs.

H. Canada-U.S. Relations Committee: NAFTA/USMCA: Progress on Negotiations

The panellists discussed the challenges related to the implementation of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) by U.S. state and Canadian provinces.

Michelle Egan, Professor, American University, and Council on Foreign Relations (IAF) Fellow

- Most free trade agreements negotiated recently have expanded in scope and depth. The implementation of such agreements has required more structural reforms to countries' economic institutions, which in turn has provided a greater role to subnational governments.
- It will be difficult for the United States and the European Union (EU) to reach a trade agreement because there are too many differences in the way the economic institutions of both jurisdictions function. Accordingly, a U.S–EU trade agreement is likely to be very different and less ambitious than the USMCA or the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Honourable Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Government of Ontario

- The volume of trade between Canada and the United States is not fully appreciated on each side of the border.
- One out of every five jobs in Ontario depends on trade between Canada and the United States. In the United States, close to 9 million jobs depend on trade between the two countries.
- Ontario is the largest trading partner for 16 U.S. States, and the second-largest trading partner for 19 others.
- It's important that trade between Canada and the United States continue uninterrupted; protectionist policies are harmful for the economies of the two countries.
- Implementation of the USMCA, while expected to account only for a modest economic growth, will ensure that trade between the three countries continues.
- Buy America policies remain a serious concern for Ontario.

Christopher Sands, Senior Research Professor and Director of the Center for Canadian Studies, Johns Hopkins University Nitze School

- The USMCA is a more complex agreement than the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) and will require signatory countries to educate small business on how they can benefit from the agreement's new provisions.
- If the USMCA is not ratified, NAFTA will continue to apply. This will be so even if the U.S. President decides to withdraw from NAFTA because only the U.S. Congress has the power to repeal its application in the United States.

I. Census 2020: State Efforts for a Complete Count

The panellists engaged in a discussion on how to promote participation in the U.S. 2020 Census.

Juliana Cabrales, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Education Fund

- The proposal to add a question about citizenship in the census has affected the U.S. Census Bureau's credibility with immigrants, even if that question has since been removed.
- Moving to online filling can be an impediment for certain groups of peoples with limited access to the Internet. Although filling the census by mail or phone will still be possible, some may be reluctant to ask for these methods and may not respond to the census as a result.

Larra Clark, Deputy Director, Public Library Association, and the American Library Association's Public Policy and Advocacy Office

- Public libraries across the United States are taking part in the effort to reach citizens and inform them about the census.
- Public libraries efforts include:
 - having computers available to complete the census online; and
 - helping peoples in filling the census.

Norman Bristol Colón, Executive Director, Governor's Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

- Pennsylvania established a commission to ensure maximum participation in the 2020 census. Initiatives of the Commission's include:
 - making information about the census available to the public; and
 - ensuring all state agencies call on citizens to fill the census when delivering services.

Senator Kevin Parker, New York State Senate

- A precise countdown of everybody living in the country is vital and it has an impact on many other issues, as it affects:
 - how, where and to whom government services are delivered;
 - how the political power is distributed (i.e., the allocation of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives); and
 - the quality of academic research.
- With the census going to online filling, there is a risk that poorest areas and those that lack adequate Internet access are undercounted.

Representative Carlos Tobon, Rhode Island

- Since Census are held every 10 years, it is important that everyone get counted because their impacts are felt over a long period of time.

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 AND TERRITORIES THAT ARE MEMBERS 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
U.S. Virgin Islands

CANADIAN PROVINCES THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS' EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

New Brunswick
Nova Scotia
Ontario
Prince Edward Island
Quebec

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	59th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference (ERC)
DESTINATION	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States
DATES	28-31 July 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michael L. MacDonald Hon. Percy Downe
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Brenda Shanahan
STAFF	Mr. Alexandre Lavoie
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 4,122.91
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 3,226.78
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,238.53
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 1,986.00
TOTAL	\$ 10,574.22