

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

**Annual National Conference of the Council of State
Governments**

San Juan, Puerto Rico, United States of America

From December 4 to 7, 2019

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 4–7 December 2019, Senator Jane Cordy, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), led a delegation of Canadian parliamentarians to the annual national conference of the Council of State Governments (CSG) in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The other members of the delegation were Senators Jim Munson and Leo Housakos. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Alexandre Lavoie, Advisor to the Canadian Section of the IPG.

THE EVENT

The CSG serves all three branches of state government and provides regional fora – the western, Midwestern, southern and eastern regional conferences – through which ideas and insights are exchanged with a view to shaping public policy.

Each year, the CSG convenes a national conference, which is attended by state legislators from throughout the United States, as well as selected governors.

DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

The CSG's national conference provides members of the Canadian Section with the opportunity to speak with state legislators representing regions throughout the United States. Moreover, the conference provides members of the Canadian Section with an opportunity to give input to, and gather information about, state-level issues that may affect Canada. Accordingly, participation in this conference contributes to the Canadian Section's ability to achieve the IPG's four main goals: identify points of convergence in respective policies; initiate dialogue on points of divergence; encourage exchanges of information; and promote better understanding among legislators on shared issues of concern.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

During the conference, delegates attended sessions held on the following topics:

- Disability Employment Policy
- Workforce of Tomorrow and the Future of Work
- Privacy and Cybersecurity
- Recycling Technology
- International Trade and Investment

Delegates also attended the Women in Government breakfast and participated in the CSG Campaign Against Hunger, where meals were packed for the benefit of peoples struggling with hunger in Puerto Rico.

The following summarizes discussions that occurred during relevant selected sessions.

A. Work Matters: A Disability Employment Policy Primer

1. Importance of Disability Employment Policy

David D’Arcangelo, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Mr. D’Arcangelo spoke about the challenges and the opportunities for state governments related to the implementation of policies that foster the inclusion of persons with disability (PWDs) into the workforce.

- In the United States, the participation of PWDs in the labour force was estimated at 20.6% in 2019, compared to 68.7% for people with no disability. The unemployment rates for PWDs was 6.1% in 2019, compared to 3.2% for people with no disability.
- In an era of labour shortage, designing policies to bring more PWDs into the workforce is particularly important.
- Policymakers face a two-step challenge: first, determining how to bring more PWDs into the labour force; second, how to get more PWDs employed.

2. Disability Etiquette, Fostering Inclusion

Andrew Karhan, K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan, Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University

The speakers explained how crucial it is to change organizational culture to facilitate the inclusion of PDWs into the workforce.

- Since the Industrial Revolution, policies regarding PWDs have evolved from a Medical Welfare Model to a Social/Human Rights Model.
- Whereas the Medical Welfare Model focused on a person’s disability and how to overcome it, the Social/Human Rights Model focuses on the acceptance of PWDs and making changes to the environment to better include PWDs in the society they live in.
- The Social/Human Rights Model is based on the ability to address discrimination against PWD, such as failing to provide accessibility beyond wheelchair ramps, assuming that PWD have no autonomy, and assuming disability is always visible.
- Universal design is a concept in which products and work environments are designated to be usable by all peoples without the need for adaptation, whereas

accessibility is about compliance with certain standards. To adopt universal design, organizations should:

- invest in the most accessible products from the start instead of making adaptation later;
 - encourage innovation and the creation of products that are usable by everybody; and
 - engage staff to promote inclusivity.
- To bring more PWDs into the workforce, businesses and organizations may need to review their staffing process to remove any barriers to the hiring of PWDs.

3. Work Matters Overview

Bobby Sylverstein, Principal, Powers Pyles Sutters & Verville PC

Mr. Sylverstein made a presentation on the development and the implementation of policies by state governments that encourage inclusion of PWDs into the workforce.

- Accessibility policies ensure PWDs can fully contribute to the society. Furthermore, facilitating the employment of PWDs enhances economic productivity.
- States can consider the following policy options to foster the inclusion of PWDs into the workforce:
 - Laying the groundwork:
 - Implementing policies that increase inclusion of PWDs in the public sector, serving as an example for the private sector.
 - Incentivize the hiring of PDWs in the private sector by providing financial support and technical assistance.
 - Preparing PWDs for work:
 - Implement policies that promote educational and career readiness of PWDs.
 - Implement measures that facilitate skill development of PWDs through work-based learning.
 - Allowing PWDs to access work opportunities:
 - Ensure that accessible mode of transportation is widely available.
 - Adopt policies to ensure that accessible information and assistive technologies are available.

- Implement policies that the built environment is accessible, not only buildings.
- Helping PWDs keep their jobs:
 - Develop policies that support employees in the event of injury, illness or a change in status of an individual's disability.
- Further work needs to be done to assess the impact of artificial intelligence and the rise of short-term employment contracts and freelance work on PWDs.

4. States as a Model Employer

Carol A. Beatty, Maryland Secretary of Disabilities
Senator Julie Morrison, Illinois
Representative Dan Miller, Pennsylvania

The three panellists answered questions and engaged in discussions on how states can act as model employers regarding PWDs.

- Getting employers to hire more PWDs
 - By setting the example, states can show employers the best and most proven ways to attract employees with disabilities. (Morrison)
 - Politicians cannot ask businesses to do what their public service is not doing. For that reason, there are times when states must intervene if market forces alone are not sufficient to lead to the hiring of PWDs. (Miller)
- Importance of state leadership
 - Maryland has a cabinet position responsible for PWDs since 2004 and the secretary who holds that position must be a PWD. His/her department, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, coordinates the delivery of services to PWDs offered by other state agencies. He/she is supported by the Maryland Commission on Disabilities. (Beatty)
 - Pennsylvania has an Employment First Policy aimed at increasing employment of Pennsylvanians with a disability. Among other things, the Policy seeks to increase the number of PWDs hired by state agencies. (Miller)
 - The Illinois Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities was created to determine where the state of Illinois was in terms of hiring PWDs. The Task Force plays an important role in informing public and private sector leaders on issues related to the employment of PWD. (Morrison)
- Challenges and Opportunities

- Elected officials need to raise the issues of PWD employment more often and challenge the public service and the private sector to do more. (Beatty)
- Policy makers need to understand the needs of grassroots organizations that support PWDs; in many cases, policies and programs only require small adjustments to respond to the needs of PWDs. (Morrison)
- Policy makers should always include employers and businesses in the development of policies or programs aimed at PWDs. (Miller)

5. Transportation, Technology and Other Employment Support

Representative Aaron Bangor, Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disability **Robert Spendlove, Utah**

The two panellists discussed the potential impact of new technologies in supporting PWD employment.

- Technology in general
 - PWDs face physical barriers, cultural barriers as well as administrative barriers. As governments and businesses continue embracing new technologies, there is a need to ensure that these technologies do not create a new category of barriers for PWD. (Bangor)
 - States should only adopt new technologies that are accessible to PWD in order to make these widely available to private employers afterward. (Bangor)
- Automated vehicles
 - Automated vehicles could eliminate the dependence of PWDs on others for their transportation needs. (Spendlove)
 - Transportation is a significant barrier for many PWDs. As new technologies are making their way into vehicles, and as automated vehicles are being developed, there is a need to ensure that new vehicles are conceived in a way that they do not create new barriers for PWD. (Bangor)
 - The lack of affordable accessible transportation options is the main barrier for many PWDs. (Bangor)
- Technology in Education
 - It is best to ensure that technologies are developed in a way that is accessible at the procurement step to avoid adaptation costs at the implementation step. (Bangor)

B. CSG Future of Work National Task Force

6. Intrinsic Motivation and Competency-Based Education

The panellists offered their views on the role of competency-based education in increasing student motivation and the challenges for implementing it.

Eunice Mitchell, Regional Director, Big Picture Learning

- Personalized learning is more likely to encourage students to see themselves as continuous learners.
- The traditional school system is filled with obstacles that make it difficult to implement personalized learning, such as:
 - inflexible policies;
 - inflexible education program design; and
 - state-level standard testing and graduation requirements.

Michael Berry, Principal, White Mountains Regional High School, New Hampshire

- In order to implement competency-based education in a school, it is necessary to have buy-in from the parents.
- Changing the way students are tested can improve their motivation; students are more interested in the skills and knowledge they are acquiring more than the tests themselves. For that reason, education programs should focus more on competencies than strict knowledge.

Mary Lefebvre, Principal Research Scientist for Workforce Policy, ACT

- The development of soft skills, such as adaptability, communication, creative thinking and teamwork, is as important as the acquired knowledge for the success of students. That said, these skills are very hard to test.
- The standardized tests that are used to admit students in post-secondary education do not measure appropriately the capacity of students to succeed in school and, ultimately, in the workforce.

C. International Committee – International Uncertainty: Tools and Resources for States to Grow their Economy through Trade and Investment

Brad Setser, Council on Foreign Relations

Mr. Setser made a presentation on the state of global and U.S. trade.

- U.S. trade has been somewhat stagnant in recent years. Since 2008, if excluding oil exports, the growth of U.S. trade has been lower than the growth of the U.S. economy.

- One of the reasons for the slow growth of U.S. trade in recent years is the reduction of China's imports. Other reasons include:
 - the near nonexistent economic growth in the European Union;
 - the low prices of commodities.
- The *Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement* should only have a marginal positive impact on trade between the three countries.

D. Bringing Data into the Conversation

Richard Leadbeater, State/Provincial Government Industry Solutions Manager, Esri

Mr. Leadbeater made a presentation on how Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping can be used by policymakers.

- GIS mapping is a valuable tool for policy-making as it transforms broad geographic data into location-specific data. It helps identify where policy intervention and programs could be the most effective.
- GIS mapping can also increase the ability of policy makers to engage with citizens by gaining knowledge about the location of those affected by policies and programs.
- GIS involves three aspects: collecting data, displaying data and interpreting data. To be effective, the right data must be collected to avoid introducing bias. Furthermore, data must be appropriately presented.

E. Closing the Loop: Emerging Recycling Technologies

Adam S. Peer, American Chemistry Council

Mr. Speer made a presentation on how plastic wastes could be valued and reprocessed instead of being sent to landfill.

- 69% of plastic wastes go to landfill in the United States. This is a pure economic lost, as plastic wastes can be used as feedstock for new products.
- There is a need to move from today's linear economy, where plastic wastes are undervalued, to a circular economy, where plastic wastes are reprocessed.
- Technologies that would allow the recycling of all types of plastic waste exist, but economies of scale that would allow their profitable use are currently lacking.
- Governments could incentivize investments in new recycling technologies by:
 - putting in place recognition programs for businesses that use better packaging techniques or increase the share of recycled plastic in their packaging;

- creating tax incentives for businesses that invest in new recycling technologies or that add recycled plastic content in their products; or
- providing grants for new recycling technologies demonstration projects.

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Annual National Conference of the Council of State Governments
DESTINATION	San Juan, Puerto Rico, United States
DATES	December 4 to 7, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Jane Cordy Hon. Jim Munson Hon. Leo Housakos
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Alexandre Lavoie
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 6,842.52
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 8,278.98
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,015.53
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,478.05
TOTAL	\$ 19,615.08