



Report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

12th Gathering of ParlAmericas Gender Equality Network

Virtual Sessions

September 23 and October 2, 2020

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

On September 23 and October 2, 2020, a delegation of Canadian parliamentarians participated in the 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE). The delegation was composed of the Honourable Rosa Galvez, Senator; the Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator; the Honourable Julie Miville-Dechêne, Senator; the Honourable Kim Pate, Senator; and Marc G. Serré, Member of Parliament and Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas.

The delegation was supported by Julie Pelletier, Association Secretary as well as Nadia Faucher and Alison Clegg, Canadian Section Advisors.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE 12TH GATHERING OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The 12th Gathering of the PNGE was held virtually on the theme “Designing Inclusive Futures in Partnership with Youth.” It was organized jointly by the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada.

OPENING INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

The meeting opened with a video featuring a dialogue between the Honourable Jean Augustine, P.C., former minister and former Grenadian–Canadian parliamentarian and Ashlee Burnett, Chair of the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) Trinidad and Tobago chapter.

During the dialogue, Ms. Augustine, the first Black woman elected to Canada’s House of Commons, spoke about the journey that led to her election and February being officially recognized as Black History Month in Canada. Ms. Augustine and Ms. Burnett then discussed strategies for inspiring young women to run for leadership and decision-making positions, such as promoting civic education, encouraging young women to get involved in student life in their schools, and establishing mentoring programs before and after an election.

Then they discussed ways to make parliaments more youth-friendly. For example, they explained how involving young people in mock parliaments can give them a voice and educate them about political systems. Ms. Augustine mentioned that the Canadian organization Equal Voice organizes such mock parliaments involving young Canadian women. Ms. Burnett spoke about her participation in the Youth Leadership Conference, organized in collaboration with ParlAmericas in March 2020, where she participated in a mock national parliament with a group of about 50 young women from Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Burnett and Ms. Augustine also reflected on how the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting already vulnerable groups. They stressed that investments should prioritize these groups.

They concluded by encouraging young people, especially girls, to express their opinions and get involved in intergenerational conversations to better understand the past in order to build a better future.

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

On September 23, 2020, the Canadian delegates participated in a working group session in English for the Caribbean and Canadian parliamentarians. The Honourable Chester Humphrey, President of the Senate of Grenada and Vice-President (the Caribbean) of the PNGE, and the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, delivered the opening remarks. Specifically, they highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately impacting women and girls in Caribbean countries.

Afterwards, Tonni Brodber, UN Women's representative for the Caribbean office, gave a presentation on the Generation Equality Forum, an initiative established to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This forum highlights the importance of intergenerational partnerships in achieving gender equality. Ms. Brodber also explained how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities for women and girls in the Caribbean region.

WORKING GROUP ON GIRLS, STEM AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

For the Working Group on Girls, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the Future of Work, Cindy Andrews of CIWiL gave a presentation and moderated a discussion on the state of women's and girls' participation in STEM around the world. In particular, she discussed the barriers that may limit the ability of women to study or work in STEM. She also provided examples of innovative projects run by women working or studying in these fields.

Afterward, the young people and parliamentarians in the working group shared their experiences with the participation of women and girls in STEM. They discussed strategies to increase this participation, such as through collaboration between parliamentarians and youth groups. In particular, the young people who participated in this working group shared their personal experiences that led them to study or work in STEM. They noted that the results of youth consultations are not always considered in policy implementation. To this end, they encouraged parliamentarians to follow up in order to ensure that youth perspectives are truly taken into account not only in policy implementation, but also at the various stages of the parliamentary process.

Senator Miville-Dechéne shared aspects of the Canadian experience, noting that girls represent only 16% of computer science students in the country. She mentioned Canadian initiatives and organizations to get girls interested in STEM from an early age. She also told the working group that some Canadian parliamentarians regularly consult youth groups as part of their work.

WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

The Working Group on Climate Change and Disasters was moderated by María Boada, Program Officer, Climate Change and Sustainable Development, ParlAmericas. The working group participants discussed youth-led climate change initiatives in their respective countries and identified possible collaborations between young people,

particularly Indigenous youth and young women, and parliamentarians on climate change and disasters. Some of the young participants shared their personal experiences of working with parliaments on climate change.

Marc Serré, MP, noted the value of non-partisan collaboration between young people and politicians, stating that young people bring a sense of urgency to the climate change discussions. Members of the working group also stressed the importance of youth parliaments and the interesting and meaningful deliberations that take place there.

The session concluded with the working group members presenting ideas on ways to facilitate collaborations between young people and lawmakers. For example, it was suggested that politicians could help young people find the best way to raise their views and positions within the parliamentary community. Members also noted the importance of having an impartial discussion on climate change issues, identifying parliamentarians willing to bring youth perspectives to parliament, and building relationships and sharing information with these parliamentarians.

WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

The third working group provided a dialogue on women in leadership and decision-making. Leah Thompson of CIWiL moderated the discussion and gave a presentation on the activities of this organization, which advocates for gender equality in the Caribbean and equal representation of women in decision-making and politics. Ms. Thompson emphasized that greater involvement of women would help build stronger democracies. She also described some of CIWiL's programs, including student parliaments to encourage young women to enter politics and various mentoring and networking activities between women parliamentarians and young leaders.

The working group participants were then invited to present an initiative in their country that promotes women's participation in leadership and decision-making. Senator Marilou McPhedran spoke about the Canadian initiative Daughters of the Vote by Equal Voice. This initiative gives young women and leaders with different gender identities the opportunity to learn about Canada's political institutions, with the goal of encouraging them to get involved in formal political processes.

PLENARY SESSION

The 12th Gathering of the PNGE concluded on October 2, 2020, with a plenary session to share the key points discussed in the working groups, to share young people's points of view with the parliamentarians present and to adopt the declaration of this meeting.

The plenary session was opened by the Honourable Germán Blanco, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Colombia; the Hon. Chester Humphrey of Grenada; Maya Fernández Allende, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile and President of the PNGE; and Elizabeth Cabezas, Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador and President of ParlAmericas. Opening remarks included the importance of intergenerational dialogue for parliamentarians and the need to take into account the contributions of both young people and older adults.

The working group rapporteurs then summarized the discussions of each of the working groups, which took place in English on September 23 and in Spanish on September 25.¹ Senator Miville-Dechêne presented the conclusions of the working group on girls, STEM and the future of work. She said that this group concluded that the participation of women in STEM offers significant transformational potential for societies. The Senator added that the group felt initiatives to increase the participation of women and girls in STEM should include a diversity of perspectives, including those of women living with disabilities, Indigenous women and LGBTQ people.

Ivannia Rivera, a member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, presented the conclusions of the working group on the promotion of co-responsibility in care work, which was conducted in Spanish. She stressed that parliamentarians should work with youth-led organizations to ensure that initiatives to promote cultural changes regarding co-responsibility for care work are supported by legislation, such as parental leave laws. Parliaments should also support youth initiatives regarding the promotion of positive masculinity and efforts to put a value on care work.

Senator Ranard Henfield of the Bahamas, Vice President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, shared the conclusions of the panel discussion on climate change and disasters. This group concluded that parliamentarians and other policymakers should consult with people from diverse backgrounds on climate change issues. The group also encouraged parliamentarians to look to the expertise of youth in this field and let them set the agenda for discussions when they are consulted.

Nielsen Pérez Pérez, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, presented the conclusions of the working group on the promotion of women's health. According to this working group, policies promoting women's health, including their sexual and reproductive health, should be holistic, rooted in a human rights perspective, and incorporate contributions from youth-led organizations.

Senator Yokymma Bethelmy of Trinidad and Tobago presented an outline of the discussions during the English-language working group on women in leadership and decision-making. This group encouraged parliamentarians to create opportunities for young women and their organizations to be consulted at all stages of parliamentary decision-making processes. According to this group, decisions concerning young people should be made with them at the table.

Mexican Senator Veronica Camino, Vice President for North America of the PNGE, shared the conclusions of the working group on gender-based violence. This group concluded that although legal frameworks are important to end violence against women, they are not enough. The group expressed the view that this will only be achieved through changing the culture and allocating sufficient resources to implement policies and legislation addressing violence against women.

Lastly, Maritza Espinales, member of the National Assembly of Nicaragua and of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, noted that the Spanish-language working group on women in leadership and decision-making concluded that certain population groups—

¹ The Canadian parliamentarians participated in the working group offered in English and French on September 23, 2020. A similar session was offered in Spanish and Portuguese on September 25, 2020.

including women, LGBTI people and Indigenous and Afro-descendant youth—face obstacles in the enjoyment of their rights, including their right to education, meaningful employment and civic participation. In order to promote youth and women’s leadership, policies and laws must consider a diversity of perspectives, including those of these groups.

The plenary session continued with a panel of young speakers who shared their experiences on how to include young voices in parliamentary processes. Nancy Mitchell, a member of the Canadian Prime Minister’s Youth Council, explained the role of the young people on the Council and the importance of this type of body in ensuring that youth perspectives, including those on gender equality, are heard. Subsequently, Senator María Eugenia Catalfamo, the youngest senator in the Congress of Argentina, explained that she is promoting the creation of a youth committee in the Congress of Argentina and a youth law to foster youth participation in that country. The panel ended with presentations by Naomi Ephraim and J’Nelle Bellizaire, from Antigua and Barbuda, who shared their experience as interns in the office of the President of the Senate of that country. These speakers said that this allowed them to learn more about the parliamentary process in Antigua and Barbuda.

The plenary session concluded with the reading of the declaration of the 12th Gathering of the PNGE and a closing address by Karina Arteaga, Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador and PNGE Vice President for South America.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	12th Gathering of ParlAmericas Gender Equality Network
DATES	September 23 and October 2, 2020
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Rosa Galvez Hon. Marilou McPhedran Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne Hon. Kim Pate
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Marc Serré
STAFF	Ms. Julie Pelletier Ms. Nadia Faucher Ms. Alison Clegg
TRANSPORTATION	0.00

ACCOMMODATION	0.00
HOSPITALITY	0.00
PER DIEMS	0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	0.00
TOTAL	0.00

*No expenses incurred. The seminar was held by video conference.