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

### **18th Plenary Assembly**

#### **Virtual Sessions**

**November 26, 29 and December 10, 2022**

# Report

## Delegation Members and Staff

On 26 and 29 November 2021, as well as 10 December 2021, Mr. Marc G. Serré, MP, Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas, led a delegation to ParlAmericas' 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly, which was focused on the topic of "Rebuilding the Social Contract"; it was hosted virtually by Chile's Senate. The other delegates were Senator Rosa Galvez, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Section and President of ParlAmericas' Parliamentary Network on Climate Change (PNCC), Senator René Cormier, Second Vice-President (North America) of ParlAmericas' Open Parliament Network, Senator W. Brent Cotter, Senator Amina Gerba and Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie.

ParlAmericas' 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly coincided with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ParlAmericas' creation and the adoption of the *Inter-American Democratic Charter* of the Organization of American States (OAS). The meeting was attended by legislators from 26 countries, legislative staff, subject-matter experts, and representatives of both civil society and youth organizations.

Julie Pelletier, Association Secretary, as well as Clare Annett, Alison Clegg and Erin Virgint, Advisors to the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas, supported the Canadian delegation.

## Activities during parlamericas' 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly

### A. 26 November 2021: Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue

The meeting's [first session](#) was an inter-parliamentary dialogue about the benefits of social protection policies that are inclusive. The session included a keynote presentation by Luis Almagro, the OAS' Secretary General, and a high-level discussion on rebuilding the social contract.

In providing opening remarks on behalf of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors, Senator Galvez highlighted the importance of continuing to address the COVID-19 pandemic while concurrently fighting climate change and tackling structural issues that are widening inequalities and poverty. In Senator Galvez's view, a gender lens should be applied to rebuilding the social contract. Mexican Senator Verónica Camino, President of ParlAmericas' Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, moderated the session.

#### 1. Keynote Presentation

Mr. Almagro emphasized both that the world is facing uncertainty and crises, and that there must be strong democracies to protect the health and well-being of countries' populations. According to Mr. Almagro, in responding to the pandemic, countries have attempted to make the best decisions from political, social, public and economic perspectives. In specifying that responses to future pandemics could be improved by ensuring both that democracies become more inclusive and that the public has greater

freedoms and political rights, Mr. Almagro identified three goals: achieve better protection for vulnerable populations, ensure improved social equity and address the climate crisis. In Mr. Almagro's opinion, to achieve a more equitable and inclusive social contract, governing institutions must examine how diverse variables affect different groups of people, such as women, Black communities and Indigenous populations. Mr. Almagro concluded by asserting that legislators have a role to play in these systemic changes, and by suggesting that a new social contract that applies to everyone equally must be built on trust between citizens and their governing institutions.

## **2. High-Level Discussion**

Senator Camino moderated the high-level discussion that involved presentations by:

- the Honourable Reginald Farley, President of Barbados' Senate;
- Deputy Paola Vega, member of Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly and Vice-President (Central America) of the PNCC; and
- Representative Juan Carlos Losada, member of Colombia's House of Representatives.

Senate President Farley underscored the importance of ensuring that countries' foreign policies align with their goals and values, such as those relating to climate change, equal rights and democracy. In explaining that multilateralism, collaboration and cooperation should inform efforts to build on relationships between and among members of the Caribbean Community, Senate President Farley insisted that actions in two areas are integral to minimizing conflict and addressing the discontent that is becoming prevalent around the world: engage and empower citizens through a social partnership; and ensure that the public trusts the government elected to represent citizens.

Deputy Vega noted that elections do not guarantee a democracy, and contended that countries must examine the ways in which citizens can – or cannot – access opportunities to participate in their countries' democracy. With a focus on a new social contract, Deputy Vega highlighted that efforts must begin from the perspective of human rights, and must encompass cultural, social and economic rights equally. Deputy Vega also commented that climate change considerations must be incorporated into any new social contract, with an intergenerational dialogue occurring to bring new ideas and approaches to such a contract. Finally, Deputy Vega suggested that the public and private sectors should work together, particularly to support the care sector, because gender equality cannot be achieved without improving such support.

Representative Losada stated that the 2016 Havana peace agreement, which is designed to bring about a ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, must be implemented in order to stop the violence and address the profound causes of war in Colombia; in Representative Losada's view, implementing the agreement would require the Government to provide farmers with land. According to Representative Losada, the agreement should form the basis for a new social contract, although drug dealing should also be addressed. Regarding the environment, Representative Losada acknowledged that establishing global environmental agreements may be a challenge, but a new social contract should consider global climate cooperation.

The meeting's participants then posed questions to the three presenters. Many of the interventions focused on integrating climate change considerations and human rights perspectives into any new social contract, as well as strengthening public trust in governing institutions.

In delivering the closing remarks for the session, the Honourable Manzoor Nadir – Speaker of Guyana's National Assembly and member of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors – contended that rebuilding the social contract should be a democratic and inclusive process that is based on trust. In addition, in Speaker Nadir's opinion, democracy must continue to play an integral role in achieving sustainable positive change and must engage citizens, including youth and women.

## **B. 29 November 2021: Parliamentary Dialogue with Civil Society and Youth Representatives**

The meeting's [second session](#) involved a parliamentary dialogue between legislators from the Americas and the Caribbean, and representatives of youth and civil society organizations. In providing welcoming remarks for the session, Deputy Javier Macaya – a member of Chile's Chamber of Deputies and President of ParlAmericas' Open Parliament Network – and Senator Alincia Williams Grant – President of Antigua and Barbuda's Senate and member of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors – underscored the importance of collaboration between legislators on one hand, and representatives of youth and civil society organizations on the other hand.

Mr. Serré moderated the session, which involved presentations by:

- Paulina Valenzuela, member of the Chilean Constitutional Convention; and
- Jorge Marín, former youth member of Panama's National Assembly and representative of Panama's Youth Legislative Impact project.

Mr. Serré opened the session by drawing attention to the impacts that the pandemic is having on youth, noting that the pandemic-related lockdowns disproportionately affected youth and had implications for their mental health, employment and education. As well, according to Mr. Serré, young women experienced greater at-home violence during the lockdowns.

Ms. Valenzuela highlighted the cultural, geographical and technological barriers that discourage young people from democratic participation, arguing that the pandemic is compounding these barriers because it has become more difficult for youth to gather. Mr. Marín added that the primary reasons for low youth participation in democracy-related activities are a lack of knowledge of democratic issues and distrust in elected officials.

The youth and civil society representatives spoke about their lived experiences and the initiatives implemented in their respective countries to rebuild the social contract and promote youth political participation.

Senator Cormier asked the presenters to identify ways in which barriers between youth and parliamentarians could be eliminated to enable consistent and productive dialogue. The presenters agreed that youth need direct avenues, such as forums or roundtables, to engage with parliamentarians. They also commented that parliamentarians should

consult with young people on certain matters, such as climate action, education and gender equity, to ensure that their views are considered. Mr. Marín suggested that political parties should include youth in their activities and decision-making, and should ensure that young people pursue public office.

## **C. 10 December 2021: Plenary Session**

The meeting's [closing plenary session](#) included presentations by parliamentary delegates, a reading of the declaration, the announcement of the election results for ParlAmericas' Board of Directors and closing statements. After Chilean Senator Marcela Sabat provided opening remarks on behalf of the host parliament, the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George – Speaker of Trinidad and Tobago's House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas – and Paraguayan Senator Blanca Ovelar – President of ParlAmericas' Board of Directors – welcomed participants to the plenary session.

### **1. Presentations by Parliamentary Delegates**

Costa Rican Deputy María Inés Solís moderated the presentations by parliamentary delegates, who outlined legislative initiatives in their countries that contribute to a rebuilding of the social contract. Those who made presentations included:

- Senator Sabat;
- Mr. Serré;
- Senate President Farley;
- Costa Rican Deputy Maria Jose Corrales;
- Prime Minister and First Vice President of Guyana Mark Antony Phillips;
- Guatemalan Deputy Sofia Hernández;
- Haitian Senator Patrice Dumont;
- Surinamer National Assembly member Radjendre Debie;
- Senator Olga Sanchez Cordero, Speaker of Mexico's Senate;
- Nicaraguan Deputy Maritza Espinales;
- Panamanian Deputy Corina Cano;
- Paraguayan Senator Patrick Kemper;
- Representative Claudius J. Francis, Speaker of Saint Lucia's House of Assembly; and
- Trinidadian Senator Donna Cox.

### **2. Closing and Election Results**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly's [declaration](#) was read and adopted, and the results of elections for new members of the Board of Directors were announced.

The following individuals were acclaimed to fill vacancies on ParlAmericas' Board of Directors:

- For the Caribbean: Saint Lucia House of Assembly of Saint-Lucia Speaker Francis;
  - For Central America: Panamanian Deputy Corina Cano and Senator Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, Speaker of Belize’s Senate; and
  - For South America: Chilean Deputy Diego Paulsen Kehr.
- Plans for the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly in 2022 were outlined.

Respectfully submitted,

Marc G. Serré, MP  
 Chair, Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

**Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	18th Plenary Assembly
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Videoconference
<b>DATES</b>	November 26, 29 and December 10, 2022
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
	Hon. Rosa Galvez Hon. René Cormier Hon. Brent Cotter Hon. Marie-Françoise Mégie Hon. Amina Gerba
	HOUSE OF COMMONS Marc G. Serré
	Ms. Clare Annett Ms. Julie Pelletier Alison Clegg Erin Virgint
<b>STAFF</b>	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 0.00

<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>