

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance Virtual Conference

By videoconference

From May 3 to 4, 2021

Report

A. DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 3–4 May 2021, the Honourable Senator Michael L. MacDonald and the Honourable Wayne Easter, P.C., M.P., co-chairs of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), led a delegation of eight IPG members, including the Honourable Senators Robert Black, Diane Griffin and Victor Oh, and Members of Parliament Mr. Vance Badawey, Ms. Rachael Harder, Mr. Randy Hoback, Mr. Brian Masse and Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, to the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance’s (Can/Am BTA’s) Spring 2021 Virtual Conference. The association secretary, Mr. Grant McLaughlin, and association advisors Mr. Brett Capwell and Ms. Marie Dumont also attended virtually.

B. THE EVENT

The Can/Am BTA typically holds two meetings each year: a spring meeting in Ottawa and a fall meeting in Washington, D.C. In 2020, both meetings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Can/Am BTA is a coalition of businesses, public-sector organizations and individuals with an interest in bilateral trade and tourism. Its mission is to maximize commercial activity and ensure the continued growth of cross-border trade, as well as improving border-crossing capabilities.

Attendees at the event included private-sector representatives involved in a number of tourism, transportation and trade-related activities, as well as representatives of a variety of U.S. and Canadian federal departments and the Canadian Embassy in Washington.

C. DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

The IPG’s Canadian Section has long participated in the Can/Am BTA activities, and members of the Canadian Section typically attend both its fall and spring meetings. Attending the Can/Am BTA meetings provides members of the Canadian Section with an opportunity to gain insight about trade and tourism related challenges being experienced by businesses and individuals, as well as about efforts and actions by governments in both countries to address these challenges.

As well, attendance at Can/Am BTA meetings enable members of the Canadian Section to learn from private- and public-sector organizations and individuals who manage Canada–U.S. border issues daily. It also provides the Canadian Section with an opportunity to inform attendees about the range of actions that it is taking in respect of shared bilateral goals, especially through the invitation that is given to attending IPG delegates to make remarks at the meeting.

In speaking to attendees at the 2021 Spring Virtual Conference, Senator MacDonald highlighted the activities of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group over the past year, including the forming of the Great Lakes – St. Laurence Group, a virtual

meeting with the Canadian American Business Council, virtual conferences organized by the Council of State Governments and the National Council of State Legislatures, and meeting with more than two dozen members of the U.S. Congress in March 2021. He emphasized that the IPG is focused on a North American recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the negative impacts of the Buy America policy and the importance of energy security in both countries.

Mr. Easter also provided an update from Parliament Hill, focusing his remarks on three priority areas of the IPG: re-opening the Canada–U.S. border safely, building back better with integrated economies; and supporting businesses with Canada’s COVID-related business supports. He drew attention to a March 2021 joint statement with Congressman Brian Higgins that stressed the need to quickly resume normal operations at the border in a safe manner and emphasized that there must be a plan for reopening. He noted that commercial goods have been crossing the border reasonably well during the pandemic.

D. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The Canada–U.S. IPG has four key objectives: 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 Canadian and American legislators on shared issues of concern. Members of the IPG’s Canadian Section pursue their goals primarily through meeting with their Congressional counterparts in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Ontario or occasionally in other locations throughout Canada and the United States. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings have occurred virtually. In addition, members liaise with U.S. governors and state legislators at national and regional conferences.

E. THE EVENT

Sessions throughout the two-day event included the following:

- insights and perspectives from Thomas Overacker of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection;
- an update from the U.S. Northern Border Caucus with co-chairs, Representative Elise Stefanik and Representative Brian Higgins;
- a panel discussion on land border crossings with Mark Fischer, President and CEO of the Council of Great Lakes Region; Natalie Kinlock, CEO of the Federal Bridge Corporation; Neena Gupta, Partner at Gowling WLG LLP; and Mark Treshock, Global Leader for Blockchain Solutions in Healthcare and Life Sciences at IBM;
- insights and perspectives from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA); with John Ossowki, President, CBSA; Peter Hill, Vice President, Commercial and Trade Branch, CBSA; Denis Vinette, Vice President Travelers Branch, CBSA; and Fred Gaspar, Director General, Commercial Program Directorate, CBSA;

- an update on the *Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement* with Dan Ujcz; Senior Counsel, Thompson Hine LLP and Andrea Van Vugt, Global Director at Harper and Associates; and
- an update from Canada’s Parliament Hill with remarks from Senator MacDonald and Mr. Easter.

In addition, Soloman Wong provided a tribute to Jim Phillips, the Can/Am BTA’s founder and former President and CEO, who passed away in July 2020.

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	Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance Virtual Conference
DESTINATION	By videoconference
DATES	May 3 to 4, 2021
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michael L. MacDonald Hon. Robert Black Hon. Diane Griffin Hon. Victor Oh
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Wayne Easter, P.C. Vance Badawey Rachael Harder Randy Hoback Brian Masse Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay
STAFF	Grant McLaughlin Brett Capwell Marie Dumont
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 0.00
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 633.62
TOTAL	\$ 633.62