

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Council of State Governments (CSG) Western Legislative Conference Annual Meeting

Boise, Idaho, United States of America

July 19–22, 2022

REPORT

A) Overview

Senator Salma Ataullahjan attended the CSG West Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho, from July 19th to 22nd 2022. As the only Canadian Senator, Senator Ataullahjan focused on Canadian issues and attended the following panels:

1. Canada Relations Committee
2. Westrends Board
3. Legislative Learning Lab - Sustainable Manufacturing: The Environmental, Economic, and Geopolitical Benefits
4. Best practices to support refugee integration
5. Energy and environment committee

B) Panels

1. Canada Relations Committee, July 20, 2022

This panel aimed to strengthen the understanding and collaboration among Western state and provincial legislators and comprised presentations by:

- Mia Yen, Consulate General of Canada in Seattle
- David Hill, Research associate, Agriculture Research Transition at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta
- Nathan Neudorf, MLA at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta
- Andrew G. Place, State Energy and Climate Policy Director at Clean Air Task Force
- Ross Burkhart, Professor of political science in the School of Public Service at Boise State University

During this session, committee members discussed binational relations, water and energy. Consul General Mia Yen highlighted common areas of priorities with the United States, such as security and defense, the Arctic and the Columbia River Treaty.

Boise State University Professor Dr. Ross Burkhart and David Hill, from the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, focused on water. Dr. Burkhart shared the role of the Western Association of Canadian Studies (WACS) in adding perspectives to discussions regarding the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty in which input from tribes, First Nations, and local communities living in the Columbia Basin had been absent from the original agreement.

Andrew Place provided a global perspective on Zero Carbon Fuels but paired it with North American insights. Mr. Place is the U.S. State Climate and Energy Policy Director at Clean Air Task Force; he shared that the International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts that global hydrogen demand will increase in the next 30 years. However, costs, infrastructure development, and markets are some of the biggest challenges. The prices make competition with high-emitting fuels impossible without public policy support.

Canada Relations Committee Co-Chair MLA Nathan Neudorf provided a local perspective from the province of Alberta. The Government of Alberta has taken a strategic,

coordinated, and collaborative approach to advance cleantech innovation. Last year a new blue hydrogen energy complex was announced with a \$1.3 billion investment by Air Products, an American-based multinational corporation to be in operation by 2024. Alberta is allocating \$15M to the project, which is also expected to create 2,500 construction and engineering jobs and intends to capture 95% of its carbon emissions. Due to its ample natural gas supply, Alberta is well suited to develop blue hydrogen production, which utilizes natural gas, carbon capture, and storage technology.

2. Westrends Board, July 21, 2022

The Westrends Board focuses on the implications of the demographic, economic and cultural trends in the West, and what they entail for policymakers.

Panelists:

- Shay Baker, Program Manager, State of Utah
- Gerald Young, Senior Research Analyst, MissionSquare Research Institute
- David Garcia, Policy Director, UC Berkeley Turner Center for Housing Innovation
- Dr. Vanessa Crossgrove Fry, Interim Director, Idaho Policy Institute

Discussions centered on most successful recruitment practices in teaching qualified candidates, such as social media and personal outreach. In light of mass retirements, workers face increasing workloads. There is also an important gendered impact to the workforce, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gerald Young provided insights on a current state and local government workforce survey which highlights many workforce changes that spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes an increase in the number of public employees resigning or retiring, although the full-time workforce in the public sector has grown since 2021. Mr. Young also spoke on the impacts of technology, particularly the fields susceptible to automation, such as customer service, clerical, transportation and management/supervision. Employees also shared that higher salaries, bonuses, appreciation and recognition, as well as increased benefits, are factors they highly consider in determining whether to remain with a particular agency or department.

Shay Baker highlighted the scope and goals of Utah's program for adults looking to re-enter the workforce after an extended absence. The program structures opportunities as return-to-work positions that provide the experience, training, skills, and mentoring an individual needs to return to the workforce without starting from the bottom of the career ladder.

Dr. Vanessa Crossgrove Fry provided an overview of the severity of the housing affordability crisis, including the gap in rental homes affordable units from low-income renter households across the country. She also discussed approaches and interventions that state and local governments could take to address housing shortages, such as researching and educating on the housing issues, establishing goals and metrics, preserving the existing affordable housing stock, investing in public housing trust funds, providing fee waivers, expediting permitting, inclusionary zones, and establishing multisector partnerships.

3. Legislative Learning Lab – Sustainable Manufacturing: The Environmental, Economic, and Geopolitical Benefits, July 21, 2022

Participants in this session discussed innovations that have been developed and deployed at the power plant in Soda Springs, Idaho, to improve sustainability and reduce environmental impacts. Participants also learned about the economic benefits to the region, including the impact on product value, supply chain, and jobs.

4. Best practices to support refugee integration, July 22, 2022

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) offered an interactive overview of the critical roles played by states in the integration of refugee and immigrant communities. There were discussions on the lack of choice for refugees in terms of resettlement in the United States, as well as the absence of mental health support. Senator Atallahjan shared some best practices from a Canadian perspective, using the Syrian refugees as a case study.

Presenters:

- Victoria Marie Francis, State Advocacy Officer, IRC
- Genevieve Kessler, Director of State Advocacy, IRC
- Olivia Whiteley, Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Policy and Advocacy Officer, IRC
- Annie Rose Healion, State Advocacy Officer, IRC
- Megan Frances Schwab, IRC

Presenters spoke of the importance of refugees for economic growth in the United States. Indeed, a 2017 draft report by the Department of Health and Human Services found that refugees contributed \$63 billion in revenue over the past decade. Entrepreneurship among refugees is nearly 50% higher than among US-born populations: in 2015, 181,000 refugee entrepreneurs brought in \$4.6 billion in business income. Refugee workers are also on the front line of the pandemic response.

5. Energy and Environment Committee, July 22, 2022

This session included discussions on climate challenges, energy generation and infrastructure, as well as heat pump technology.

Presenters :

- Andrew Bochman, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council's Global Energy Center & Senior Grid Strategist, Idaho National Laboratory
- Achilles Karagiozis, Director, Building Technologies and Science Center
- Jon Winkler, senior research engineer, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

Andrew Bochman spoke of the acceleration of disruptive and destructive impacts of climate change on infrastructure. Intense heat, freezes, floods, droughts, storms with higher velocity winds and melting permafrost are already happening and are likely to occur faster than traditional infrastructure planning cycles can handle. In addition, the western energy grid is at elevated risk during the summer, as droughts and extreme heat threaten reliable power generation, which means capacity shortfalls and transmission trouble are likely. Hence, Mr. Bochman recommends prioritizing infrastructure assets for defense, performing a predictive risk assessment, including an interdependency analysis

of assets and considering the resilience measures and functional adaptations needed to protect said assets.

Achilles Karagiozis and Jon Winkler spoke on heat pump technology, as there are now various options and technologies to heat and cool our living and working environments. Geothermal heat pumps now offer a renewable, efficient option to homeowners and builders. They use much less energy, since they draw heat from the ground, are more efficient, save energy and money, reduce air pollution and are suitable for all areas of the United States.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald, Senator,
Co-Chair,

Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P.,
Co-Chair,

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Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Council of State Governments (CSG)Western Legislative Conference Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Boise, Idaho, United States of America
DATES	July 19–22, 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$5,250.84
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,341.29
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$512.43
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$566.14
TOTAL	\$7,670.70