

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Bilateral Visit with Members of the United States Senate

Washington, D.C., United States of America

From May 15 to 16, 2023

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 15 to 16 May 2023, the Honourable Senator Michael MacDonald and the Honourable John McKay, P.C., M.P., co-chairs of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), led a delegation to Washington, D.C. to attend a bilateral meeting with the United States Senate and to meet with members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The delegation consisted of honourable senators Jean-Guy Dagenais and Yuen Pau Woo, and members of parliament Kody Blois, Ted Falk, Randy Hoback, Brian Masse and Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay. The delegation was accompanied by Lyla Malow, Executive Secretary, Shannon Petry, Secretary, and Marie Dumont, Advisor to the Canadian Section.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CANADA–UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Created nearly six decades ago, the IPG has four main objectives: to find points of convergence in the respective national policies of Canada and the United States, to initiate dialogue on points of divergence, to encourage exchanges of information and to promote better understanding between Canadian and American parliamentarians on shared issues of concern. The members of the Canadian Section of the IPG pursue their objectives primarily by meeting with their Congressional counterparts in Washington, D.C. or Ottawa, and occasionally elsewhere in Canada or the United States. They also do so by liaising with U.S. governors and state legislators at national and regional conferences throughout the United States and sometimes in Canada.

THE DELEGATION'S VISIT AND OBJECTIVES IN MAY 2023

The primary focus of the May 2023 visit to Washington, D.C. was to attend the bilateral meeting and reception with members of the U.S. Senate. Members also met with some members of the House of Representatives. In addition, delegates attended a reception hosted by Center Forward, a bipartisan political action committee, and had opportunities to meet with stakeholders of the Canada–United States relationship by attending a dinner with the Wilson Center's Canada Institute Advisory Board, whose members include former ambassadors, academics and business leaders.

To prepare for these activities, delegates attended a roundtable discussion with experts at the Wilson Center with Christopher Sands, Director of the Canada Institute; Shihoko Goto, Director for Geoeconomics and Indo-Pacific Enterprise, and Acting Director of the Asian Program; Robert Daly, Director of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States; and William Pomeranz, Director of the Kennan Institute. Delegates also attended a briefing at the Embassy of Canada in Washington D.C., which was led by Arun Alexander, Deputy Ambassador.

The visit occurred in the context of what was perceived by many as recent successes in the relationship between Canada and the United States. President Joe Biden had visited

Canada in March 2023, and during his visit announced updates to the *Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the United States*. As well, issues surrounding the Nexus Program's enrollment and renewal processes that had existed since the COVID-19 pandemic but continued beyond the restriction due to a legal dispute, were resolved shortly before the visit. In addition, the North American Aerospace Defense Command had recently responded to the high-altitude balloon from the People's Republic of China in the airspace over Canada and the United States. These topics framed several of the discussions.

THE BILATERAL MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

The bilateral meeting with the U.S. Senate was hosted by Senator Mike Crapo and Senator Amy Klobuchar. Several other U.S. Senators, including John Boozman, Maria Cantwell, Tammy Duckworth, Lisa Murkowski, Debbie Stabenow, and Roger Wicker attended the meeting. Such meetings generally take place every two years, and Canada is expected to host in 2025. This year's meetings centred around several themes: security and defence; energy, the economy and the environment; trade and agriculture; and the border. Because discussions between Canadian Section members and U.S. federal legislators are private and held on the condition of anonymity, the report below provides a general summary of the issues discussed by legislators from both countries.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

- Both countries are supportive of Ukraine and condemn Russian aggression in the region.
- There are concerns about the security and environmental risks resulting from increased maritime traffic along the Bering Strait.
- Both Canada and the U.S. will be monitoring the Arctic Council following the end of Russia's chairmanship in May 2023. Members of the council had suspended engagement with Russia in 2022.
- Canadians are interested in learning about the effectiveness of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act as a tool to address foreign interference.
- Defence alliances such as the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. known as AUKUS are mechanisms to strengthen cooperation among allies.

THE ECONOMY, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Alaskan communities have been engaging on environmental issues in their communities. To be able to support Canadian mining activities, members of the Alaskan community want assurances that Canadian practices will protect shared watersheds, species and the environment.
- The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, which spans Alaska and is one of the world's largest pipeline systems, is operating at half capacity and there may be a possibility for the U.S. to provide energy to Northern Canada.

- To move forward on the ongoing Columbia River Treaty negotiations, both countries need a solution that is win-win. The United States believes that it has been overpaying for energy storage.
- Critical minerals from Canada will be an essential part of the green transition because critical minerals from the People's Republic of China (PRC) are processed and being transformed using coal electricity, so they do not qualify as green products.
- The State of Michigan continues to oppose Line 5 in the courts. A 2010 Enbridge pipeline spill in the Kalamazoo River has had a lasting negative effect on the state's attitude toward pipelines. Line 5 continues to ensure that both countries have a supply of gasoline, diesel, propane, jet fuel, plastics and chemicals.
- The Great Lakes are a key source of freshwater. The U.S. bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act represents the single largest investment in the cleanup and restoration of the Great Lakes. U.S. Senators acknowledged Canada's funding for the Great Lakes and were pleased that Ontario Power Generation had stopped its plans to bury nuclear waste near Lake Huron.
- Nuclear energy presents another opportunity for Canada and the U.S. to work together. In Illinois, for example, 13 nuclear power plants provide 50% of the state's baseload energy. Decommissioned nuclear power plants will serve as ideal locations for new nuclear reactors.
- Carbon capture and sequestration provides an opportunity to turn waste into energy. Canada would benefit from working with states to pursue this technology.

TRADE AND AGRICULTURE

- "Re-shoring", "near-shoring" and "friend-shoring" could help secure North American supply chains. U.S. Senators made note of a proposed bill – the *De Minimis Reciprocity Act of 2023* – introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin and Bill Cassidy, that would close a trade tax loophole that allows products valued under \$800 to be permitted to enter the U.S. with little scrutiny from customs officials. The bill would require other countries to match their export regulations to adhere to U.S. requirements and provide oversight of imports from the PRC.
- Whereas some Republicans are sceptical of free trade agreements, Democrats have mixed views. Most Democrats are supportive of President Joe Biden's approach to trade, which has focused new initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Partnership instead of joining existing trade agreements such as the CPTPP.
- The U.S. is trying to pass its 2023 Farm Bill, which is an omnibus bill that determines policy and funding levels for agriculture, food assistance programs and other aspects of food and agriculture in the U.S. In general, agriculture is not a partisan issue so much as a regional issue.

BORDER ISSUES

- The border between Canada and Alaska does not have the border security issues of the border between the U.S. and Mexico. The fact that the Jay Treaty between Great Britain and the United States is not part of Canadian law, and the implications of this situation on the mobility of Indigenous peoples between Canada and the United States, was also discussed.
- Both countries worked together to address issues that arose at the Canada–U.S. border during the COVID-19 pandemic, including delays with the enrolment and renewal of the Nexus Program. Members from both countries welcomed efforts to streamline border crossing processes because the greatest incitement to travel is having ease of travel.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald,
Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-United States Inter-
Parliamentary Group

Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P.,
Co-Chair
Canada-United States Inter-
Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit with Members of the United States Senate
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., USA
DATES	From May 15 to 16, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michael L. MacDonald Hon. Yuen Pau Woo Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P. Mr. Kody Blois, M.P. Mr. Ted Falk, M.P. Mr. Randy Hoback, M.P. Mr. Brian Masse, M.P. Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, M.P.
STAFF	Lyla Malow, Secretary Shannon Petry, Secretary Marie Dumont, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$11,987.42
ACCOMMODATION	\$21,035.06
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$4,621.28
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$277.50
TOTAL	\$37,921.26