

Canada - United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada - États-Unis
Section canadienne

**REPORT OF THE
CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION OF THE
CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
TO THE
*NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION: HEALTHY
AMERICA
2006 ANNUAL MEETING
Charleston, South Carolina
August 4-7, 2006***

From 4-7 August 2006, members of the Canadian Section of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group attended the 2006 Annual Meeting of the National Governors Association in Charleston, South Carolina. This report summarizes selected presentations that were made at the meeting, which had the theme of Healthy America

**NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION: HEALTHY AMERICA
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OPENING PRESS CONFERENCE

Governors Huckabee (*Arkansas*), Napolitano (*Arizona*) and Sanford (*South Carolina*)

- the focus should be fitness, health and disease prevention
- we need to change culture, as we did regarding littering, seatbelt use, smoking and drunk driving, from a focus on illness to a focus on fitness and wellness; this change in culture and focus will take a generational cycle, rather than an election cycle
- 16% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product is spent on health care – the highest worldwide – because of the chronic diseases resulting from overeating, underexercising and smoking
- states are the incubators of national change
- prevention and wellness are key, which highlights the importance of education and early diagnosis
- all other things remaining the same, we are raising the first generation of Americans that are not expected to live as long as their parents or grandparents
- the entire system is currently focused on disease; for example, consider that we pay doctors to make someone well rather than to keep someone healthy

TRANSFORMING THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Hon. Tommy Thompson, Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Former Governor of Wisconsin

- Governors and states are the innovators of America
- health care must be understood if it is to be changed
- by 2013, dramatic change is needed; in that year, Medicare will no longer have a surplus and U.S. Congress will have to authorize new money

- the focus of the health care system must be changed from sickness and illness to wellness; at present, 5% is spent on prevention while the remaining 95% is spent when people are ill
- tobacco is the leading cause of chronic illness; since aspirin is regulated, why should nicotine not be regulated as well
- there should be a dedicated fund to assist smokers who want to quit smoking
- Type II diabetes is an epidemic, and many people are pre-diabetic; the incidence of diabetes can be reduced by a small increase in exercise and a decrease in weight
- 70% of Americans are overweight or obese
- chronic illness is “breaking the bank”
- 98,000 Americans died last year as a result of “medical mistakes,” such as giving the wrong medication in the wrong amount to the wrong person at the wrong time
- a “one size fits all” Medicaid system does not work; states should set up a program that meets the unique needs of their state
- the elderly should be encouraged to remain in their own home, rather than to move to a nursing home or institutional care
- states should be allowed, and encouraged, to innovate

HEALTHY AMERICA: A VIEW FROM THE INDUSTRY

Stephen Sanger, General Mills, Inc.

- Americans foods have a hierarchy of needs regarding the food they consume; foods must: taste good; be easy to prepare and consume; be good for consumers
- food manufacturers innovate so that taste improves over time
- most Americans do not consume their daily required servings of whole grains; food manufacturers are undertaking product innovation in order to increase the whole grain content of foods without adversely affecting taste; similar efforts are underway with respect to vegetables, which Americans also do not consume in sufficient quantities
- food manufacturers are striving to enhance the health profile of their products, and are attempting to make nutritional information more visible

Steven Reinemund, *PepsiCo, Inc.*

- there is an epidemic of obesity in the United States, and PepsiCo, Inc. wants to be viewed as part of the solution, rather than as part of the problem
- consumers have increased awareness about food qualities, such as calories, quantity and types of fats, etc.
- health and wellness is a key strategy; it is the right thing to do and it is good for business
- obesity is the result of an imbalance in the “energy in, energy out” equation; food companies can work on both aspects of the equation by providing education and promoting exercise
- taste is a consumer priority

Donald Knauss, *Coca-Cola North America*

- while change is certain, progress is not
- food companies are committed to finding solutions, since it is the right thing to do and it is in the economic self-interest of companies to do so
- food companies can promote an active lifestyle through, for example, providing pedometers and hiring athletes as corporate spokespersons
- food companies can also augment their products with healthy substances, such as omega-3 to help with cholesterol, and provide low-calorie options
- consumer education in order to assist them in making informed choices is important
- food companies should be responsible marketers of their products, and should not advertise to children under the age of 12 and should ensure that classrooms are advertisement-free zones
- although obesity is a simple issue – since it is an imbalance between calories in and calories out – the solutions are not simple

Panel Discussion

- ultimately, consumers make the decisions about what to consume, although companies provide more options and healthier alternatives
- science is, at times, required to develop healthier food options; for example, science was needed in order to remove trans fats from food products without changing their flavour and other properties
- marketing is the best opportunity to change consumer perceptions and behaviour

- advertisements directed to youth should focus on low-caloric density and high-nutrient density
- product placement is important
- forbidding the sale or consumption of certain products is not a productive way to educate; education, along with the right alternatives, are the answers
- the food industry wants to be part of the education process
- since healthier foods and lower calorie foods are not leading to a reduction in weight, efforts need to focus also on energy expenditure and physical activity; while foods are improving, health outcomes are not
- portion-control packaging is desired by consumers
- consumers need to be educated about correct portion size; portion control is a growing opportunity

HEALTH CARE REFORM: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Secretary Michael Leavitt, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- the cost of health care is a federal and state issue, and the economic viability of the U.S. depends on the ability to handle health care challenges
- more than 16% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product is spent on health care, a figure that is expected to rise to more than 20% by 2015
- the U.S. must “get better or get beat”
- reliable information about the true cost and quality of medical procedures is lacking, as are data about the number of particular procedures completed at specific hospitals and/or by a specific doctor, the success rate of the doctor or hospital, etc.
- federal-state-private partnerships are needed in order to change health care, and stakeholders must work cooperatively to develop the systems, information technology, etc. that are needed
- three major areas of need are:
 - health information technology standards – at present, systems cannot communicate, and are not aligned, with each other
 - quality standards – measures must be developed by the medical community, and the medical community must be prepared to be assessed according to them

- incentives for consumers and service providers – for example, service providers should receive more if they provide better care
- four action-forcing events are:
 - consumers want information on the true price and quality of health care they receive
 - physicians want information on the true price and quality of health care they provide
 - employers want information on the true price and quality of health care since wages are increasing at one-third the rate of health care costs and employers are, consequently, losing their competitive advantage
 - the government needs to add its voice – and its force – as a payer since it is a major employer
- a willingness to adopt health information technology, quality and pay-for-performance measures should be a requirement for doing business with the federal government
- Governors should:
 - sign an Executive Order requiring that those who do business with the state government will adopt health information technology, quality and pay-for-performance measures
 - recruit major employers to become part of a national harmonization process
 - define quality standards for physicians and hospitals
- although standards do not need to be federally developed, there should be a single set of standards

Alan Rosenbloom, Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care, Inc.

- health care providers should embrace measures that enhance consumer choice, quality and competition
- there have been dramatic improvements in nursing home quality and the quality of care for nursing home patients
- there has been a dramatic decrease in the average length of stay in nursing homes

Jana Skewes, SharedHealth

- health information technology saves money, leads to better health decisions, reduces medical errors, and minimizes fraud and abuse

- consumers should be at the centre of health care decisions
- consumer information should travel with the health care consumer along the continuum of care, with due regard for the protection of privacy
- the health information system must be connected and interoperable, with medication history, immunization history, prescription drug use, emergency room visits, information on the primary care doctor, and other relevant information, provided

CHALLENGES FACING THE EXPANDED USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION FUELS

Alan Weverstad, General Motors Corporation

- there are no silver bullets in addressing environmental and energy challenges; all available tools must be used
- hydrogen fuel cell vehicles are an opportunity; hydrogen is an almost-perfect fuel, since it is an energy carrier that offers tremendous feedstock diversity
- in promoting advanced fuel cell technology vehicles, states can provide: tax incentives for research and development; funding for pilot fleet testing; and sales tax exemptions on vehicle purchase or lease

Jim Roberts, National Mining Association

- to produce ethanol, an inexpensive energy source is needed; that source should be coal, and the United States has 27% of the world's coal reserves
- reliance on foreign energy is rising while the reliability of foreign supplies is falling in light of geopolitical turmoil and competition for energy from growing economies; coal can be part of the solution
- the energy challenges faced by the United States require immediate attention and a long-term strategy
- environmental concerns and energy needs must be addressed simultaneously
- the coal industry is experiencing a resurgence since coal is:
 - affordable, particularly in relation to natural gas
 - abundant, since there is a 240-year supply in 26 states
 - secure within U.S. borders
- the coal-to-liquid option has both benefits and challenges
- benefits of the coal-to-liquid option include:

- the creation of high-wage jobs
- greater fuel cleanliness
- energy security
- challenges of the coal-to-liquid option include:
 - oil price volatility
 - financing
- states can assist through:
 - tax incentives
 - long-term purchase agreements
 - permit facilitation
 - a reduced regulatory burden
 - encouraging mining as an occupation

Kevin Stork, U.S. Department of Energy

- E-85 ethanol faces usage challenges
- in the future, vehicles are likely to be powered with energy derived from many and varied sources
- the incremental cost of flexible fuel vehicles is less than \$200 per vehicle
- market acceptance of ethanol will require a retail price differential; in particular, the price for ethanol would have to be 30% lower
- the distribution network for infrastructure is not sufficiently well-developed; there are about 700 E-85 fuelling stations in the United States, and they are heavily concentrated in Minnesota and Illinois, compared with about 150,000 retail gasoline stations

HONOR STATES GRANT UPDATE

Tom Vander Ark, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- two promises are owed to every young American:
 - a high school diploma ought to mean college- and work-readiness
 - everyone ought to have access to great schools

- over the last decade, there has been a steady improvement in high school graduates who are college-ready

BACK TO BASICS: LEARNING TO BE CREATIVE

Sir Ken Robinson, Expert on Creativity, Innovation and Education

- among all of the challenges faced by the United States, education must be near the top of the list
- creativity should be promoted as a core competence in education, equal in importance to literacy and numeracy
- there are a number of misconceptions about creativity, including:
 - creativity is rare – in fact, everyone is capable of creativity
 - arts are the only things that are creative – while arts are creative, so too are such other subjects as math, politics, science, geography, english, etc., since you can be creative at anything that involves human intelligence
 - there is nothing that can be done to promote creativity – in fact, the conditions for creativity can be created
- all children are born with a tremendous capacity for imagination; the challenge is to ensure that the education system does not stifle their creativity and imagination
- China is currently involved in the largest education reform process in the world, and is committed to supporting creative thinking in a structured way
- it is incorrect to assume that science is associated with intelligence while arts are associated with emotion; the greatest achievements are a combination of science, technology and the arts
- most employers take a university degree for granted, but a degree is not a guarantee of employment; while a degree used to be the passport to security, now it is not a visa to get you in to the workplace
- demographic change is shifting the world's cultural profile and our economic systems
- in its education reforms, which are currently focused on math, science and literacy, the United States must make determined attempts to promote innovation and creativity systematically
- three concepts are important:
 - imagination, which makes up human intelligence

- creativity, which is the application of imagination
- innovation, which involves putting good ideas into practice
- to promote creativity systematically, the focus should be:
 - the school curriculum, with a balance needed among the arts, science, math and the humanities
 - teaching, since great education comes from great teaching
 - assessment and accountability
 - collaborative programs and partnerships

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Jerahmiel Grafstein, Senator
Co-Chair, Canadian Section
Canada-United States Inter-
Parliamentary Group

Rob Merrifield, M.P.
Co-Chair, Canadian Section
Canada-United States Inter-
Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada United-States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	National Governors Association: Healthy America – 2006 Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Charleston, SC
DATES	August 4-7, 2006
SENATORS	Hon. Jerry Grafstein, Senator
MEMBERS	
STAFF	Ms. June Dewetering, Advisor Mr. Daniel Charbonneau, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 881.05
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,590.61
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 559.16
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 1,134.60
TOTAL	\$ 5,165.42