



Canada - China Legislative Association  
Association législative Canada - Chine



Canada - Japan Inter - Parliamentary Group  
Groupe Interparlementaire Canada - Japon

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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation in the  
39th General Assembly of the  
ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)**

**Canada-China Legislative Association (CACN) and  
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group (CAJP)**

**Singapore, Republic of Singapore  
September 3–7, 2018**

## Report

The Honourable Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator, and Terry Sheehan, MP and Co-Chair of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group, participated in the 39th Annual General Assembly of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Inter-Parliamentary Assembly September 3–7, 2018, in Singapore, Republic of Singapore. They were accompanied by David Chandonnet, Executive Secretary of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group. The ASEAN member states took turns chairing the organization, which includes organizing and holding various meetings, including the Inter-Parliamentary General Assembly (AIPA)<sup>1</sup>. Canada returned to this forum in Manilla, Philippines, in 2017, after a few years' absence. The purpose of Canada's presence is to:

- maintain regular contact with the member states and discuss issues specific to the Asia-Pacific region;
- develop new contacts with parliamentarians in the region;
- present the point of view of Canadian parliamentarians on various matters; and
- raise Canada's profile on the world stage.

The ten ASEAN member states (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) sent delegations to the General Assembly. Other countries or regional entities with General Assembly observer status (Canada, Australia, Belarus, European Parliament, India, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Russia and Timor Leste) were also present. The members of the secretariats of the ASEAN Interparliamentary Assembly and ASEAN were also in attendance. Finally, Morocco and Norway were also invited and were present. These two countries wish to apply for observer country status in the future.

### **Briefing at Canadian High Commission to Singapore**

Before the General Assembly began, the delegation went to the High Commission of Canada in Singapore for an information session offered by the High Commissioner, Lynn McDonald, accompanied by an Embassy staff member, Toby Schwartz. This allowed the delegates to learn more about the political and social situation in the region, the local and regional challenges facing Singapore, and the outlook for the future. The High Commissioner shed light on the current economic situation as well as potential opportunities for Canada. Several federal and provincial government department representatives were staying on the premises of the High Commission and working to develop and maintain political and economic links between Canada and Singapore. The presence of Canadian parliamentarians at the General Assembly fostered the development of diplomatic links between the two countries and was appreciated by the High Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> The official report produced by conference organizers (in English) is at: <http://www.aipa2018.org.sg/full-conference-report>

The meeting with the High Commission also allowed delegates to discuss topics to be raised at the General Assembly, learn more about the realities of Singapore's multi-ethnic composition and Singapore's relations with other ASEAN members. This meeting was especially useful for the delegates since Ms. McDonald anticipated participating in some of the General Assembly activities and this would help confirm Canada's position on certain issues, particularly population ageing and climate change, two topics specifically assigned to the observer countries for round tables on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 5.

## **1. General Assembly and official program of activities**

### **Meeting between the Speaker of Parliament in the Republic of Singapore and delegation leaders**

On the morning of September 4, even before the official opening of the General Assembly, the delegation leaders were invited along with one of their staff members to a meeting with Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament in the Republic of Singapore. This meeting allowed Mr. Sheehan to thank Singapore for its hospitality and exchange a few words with Mr. Chuan-Jin about Canada's participation in the General Assembly and generally reiterate the commitment of Canadian parliamentarians to the Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific regions. It was also an opportunity to meet with the leaders of delegations from the other countries participating in the event, begin discussions and connect with parliamentarians from other countries. Several discussions were continued over the course of the three days of the General Assembly.

### **First plenary session**

The first plenary session began after the opening ceremonies of the General Assembly led by the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, Teo Chee Hean, on the morning of September 4. Each of the ASEAN member states and observer countries had the opportunity to speak on behalf of their delegation. Mr. Sheehan, leader of the Canadian delegation, took the floor before about one hundred participants to comment on various matters of importance to Canada, such as trade with the Asian countries, particularly Southeast Asia, investment in the region, student exchanges which enrich Canada and the participant's country of origin, the cultural diversity of Singapore as compared to Canada, Canada's commitment to human rights and cooperation with Asian countries in maintaining peace and security in the Pacific region.

### **Meeting of the ASEAN Network of Women Parliamentarians**

Although its observer status did not allow it to participate officially in discussions, the delegation still had access to the women's network discussions. Canada wishes to affirm its presence, and play a role whenever possible in matters such as the role of women parliamentarians, as was the case during the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, for example. This meeting was an opportunity for delegates to observe discussions and learn out about their content. This year, resolutions concerned the use of female entrepreneurship as development tools in gender equality, not only in terms of education and employment, but also economic prosperity. The second topic on the agenda was promoting the contribution and equality of women in technology so that they could play a

full role in the digital economy and in the current and future trends requiring a high level of digital literacy.

### **Meeting of the President of the Republic of Singapore with delegation leaders**

As during the meeting with the Speaker of Parliament the day before, the delegation leaders were invited to Istana, the official residence of Madam President Halimah Yacob of the Republic of Singapore, for an early morning meeting. This meeting was another opportunity for Mr. Sheehan to represent Canada and speak with the president and the other parliamentarians at the meeting. The president discussed her role, presidential selection in the Republic of Singapore, and her professional experience as it relates to the major topics covered in the plenary sessions and workshops at the General Assembly. She had been a parliamentarian for several years prior to becoming president and was very familiar with the role of ASEAN and the importance of AIPA meetings.

### **Dialogue with observer countries**

This activity represented the cornerstone of Canada's participation in the General Assembly. On the afternoon of September 5, all observer countries had one and a half hours to speak officially with representatives of each of the ten ASEAN member states to discuss two specific topics: the actions taken by Canada to deal with an ageing population and sharing the Canadian experience in climate change. This round table meeting enabled two delegates to play an active role in discussions.

It was agreed that Senator Ravalia would present the Canadian experience with population ageing because of his professional experience as a physician and that Mr. Sheehan, as a member of the government, would be in a better position to address the matter of climate change. The two Co-Chairs spoke for a few minutes each, followed by a round table where ASEAN members could discuss the similarities and differences between their country's specific approach in relation to the Canadian experience. This allowed them to have a productive conversation with more than a dozen parliamentarians from Southeast Asia on two important matters. It also led to a few subsequent conversations. The participants commended the Canadian delegates on the quality of their presentations and the ease with which they stimulated discussions and made this round table a great success.

Beyond the two topics selected by conference organizers and the related speeches prepared, the dialogue between Canada and ASEAN members provided an opportunity for Canada to speak more broadly about its democratic values and its commitment on the international scene. The dialogue was also an excellent opportunity for parliamentarians to present and explain the current political, social and economic reality in the country.

### **Second plenary session**

The second and final plenary session took place prior to the closing ceremonies on September 6. This was the opportunity for General Assembly organizers and hosts to present the work of various working committees and the resolutions adopted, and to reaffirm the commitment of various member states and observers to the underlying ASEAN values and to emphasize the importance of everyone's participation in this important annual multilateral conversation. The event culminated in the signing of the common declaration of the member states. Canadian delegates benefited from being able

to speak with several parliamentarians from various countries, exchange contact information and continue certain conversations. Contacts made at this forum will be useful at other, similar Asia-Pacific region meetings, since many parliamentarians are very active and tend to participate in other conferences, such as the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum. This Forum will be held in Cambodia in January 2019 and Canada is counting on sending a sizeable contingent.

## **2. Bilateral meetings outside of official activities**

As is often the case at this type of conference, organizers set up logistical support to facilitate bilateral meetings between countries interested in continuing with more specific discussions on issues or matters of common interest. Canadian delegates appreciated these opportunities to meet and talk with parliamentarians with whom they do not have regular contact due to distance.

### **Meeting with the AIPA secretariat**

Isra Sunthornvut, AIPA Secretary General, requested a meeting with the delegation and Secretariat staff members on September 5. This was an opportunity to approach a variety of topics: the organization's background, the importance of consensus in decision-making, and the ASEAN heads' desire to continue to advance and develop the organization despite the difficulties and reticence present in multilateral associations or organizations. Mr. Sunthornvut took the opportunity to express his desire to see more practical matters brought forward at AIPA general assemblies, such as trade or the pursuit of common interests in human rights. The purpose would be to strengthen dialogue and links between Canada and ASEAN member states, as well as other countries that have observer status.

The delegates expressed an openness and interest in Canada playing an important international role when its support and expertise is sought and it is offered a mission aligned with its fundamental values. In the event that an official request is made, the delegates agreed to consider the extent to which they could assist AIPA and ASEAN in any approach that would encourage closer relations with Canada and allow it to play a greater role in future meetings.

### **Meeting with delegates from Morocco**

The Moroccan delegates, Abdelaziz Omari and Ouadia Benabdellah, expressed an interest in speaking with the members of the Canadian delegation on September 5 to gain a better understanding of the AIPA observer role. Morocco wishes to increase its contribution and play a larger role in the Asia-Pacific region and, to do this, is considering applying for observer status. The Canadian experience would be an example for it to follow, and Canadian parliamentarians offered Morocco their assistance if possible and as required in applying for this status.

This was also an opportunity to discuss the role that a country like Canada is called on to play in the international, multilateral associations and organizations outside of its immediate geopolitical region, North America. Morocco already maintains good relations with the Quebec government and parliamentarians for linguistic and cultural reasons, and seeks to expand its relations with other jurisdictions, including the Government of Canada.

### **Meeting with delegates from the People's Republic of China**

The delegates requested a meeting with Ms. Wei Lv, leader of the delegation from the People's Republic of China, on September 5. Ms. Lv was accompanied by staff members and delegation representatives. The purpose of this meeting was to express the privileged relationship that Canada has with China, particularly since the Canadian delegation was partially participating in the Annual Assembly as a representative of the Canada-China Legislative Association. It was therefore seen as an opportunity to discuss matters of common interest with Chinese representatives, including climate change and the environment, green economy projects and student exchanges that would benefit Chinese students studying in Canada as well as the postsecondary educational institutions hosting them.

Delegates also discussed the last visit by CCLA delegates to China in August 2017, in which Mr. Sheehan took part, and reiterated the historical links between Canada and China, from Dr. Norman Bethune to present day. Canada has a special place in the minds of the Chinese people, and Canadian delegates have a manifest interest talking with their Chinese counterparts during events such as the AIPA conference and cultivating this mutually beneficial relationship.

### **Meeting with delegates from Vietnam**

A delegation of Vietnamese parliamentarians passed through Ottawa on June 22, 2018. The delegation included Nguyen Van Giau, who was also a delegate to the General Assembly. This was therefore an excellent opportunity to continue certain conversations that Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Van Giau had during their visit to Canada. Moreover, Mr. Sheehan had the opportunity to attend the last meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum held in Hanoi, Vietnam, in January 2018. On September 6, the members of the two delegations were able to take the time to further cultivate the links between the parliamentarians.

Canada and Vietnam share a common interest in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, so this meeting was an opportunity to further discuss matters of commerce, trade and relations between them. The parliamentarians from both parties promised to continue these cordial discussions in a multilateral forum at their next meeting.

### **Meeting with delegates from Japan**

It was important for Mr. Sheehan, as Co-Chair of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group, to speak with certain representatives from Japan at the General Assembly. On September 6, the delegation held discussions with Motome Takisawa, leader of the Japanese delegation, on several matters of importance to both countries. Mr. Takisawa took the opportunity to thank Canada for hosting the G7 Summit at Charlevoix in June 2018. The discussion revolved around the importance of commerce and trade to Japan and Canada, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the symposium organized by the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group in Vancouver in March 2018, as well as its initiatives to bring the two countries closer together and stimulate business and investment opportunities between Canadian and Japanese companies.

Mr. Sheehan reiterated the interest in having the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group host members from the Japanese Diet at the next bilateral meeting to be held in Canada as soon as possible. Canada has not hosted the Japanese delegation for a long time and Canadian parliamentarians would be only too happy to have them.

In conclusion, Canada's presence at the 39th Annual General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly enabled the Canada-China Legislative Association and Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group to actively participate in an important Asia-Pacific regional forum. In addition to bolstering its relations with several parliamentarians from about twenty countries with which delegates sometimes have had few if any opportunities for contact, this participation enabled Canada to be represented internationally and reaffirm its commitment to multilateral initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Joseph A. Day, Senator  
Co-Chair  
Canada-China Legislative Association

Terry Sheehan, M.P.  
Co-Chair  
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

## **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group and Canada-China Legislative Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	39th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Singapore, Republic of Singapore
<b>DATES</b>	September 3–7, 2018
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Terry Sheehan, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. David Chandonnet Association Secretary
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$21,285.05
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$2,032.36
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	—
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$2,215.52
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$200.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	—
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,732.93</b>