



**Visit of the Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C.,
Speaker of the Senate,
and a Parliamentary Delegation,
Arab Republic of Egypt and Republic of Turkey**

May 19 - 24, 2019

The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate, led a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Turkey from May 19 to 24, 2019.

The delegation has the honour of tabling its

Report

The official delegation was composed of the following members:

- The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate;
- The Honourable Nicole Eaton, Speaker Pro Tempore;
- The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator;
- The Honourable Josée Forest-Niesing, Senator;
- Mr. Stuart Barnable, Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the Senate; and
- Ms. Catherine Cuerrier, Secretary to the delegation.

Background – Arab Republic of Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt has an influential role in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With an estimated population of 96.9 million, Egypt is the most populous Arab country and an important centre of Arab culture and Islamic thought. The Arab League, a regional organization with 22 member countries, is based in Cairo. In 2019, Egypt assumed the presidency of the African Union (AU) and continues to lead mediation efforts between Israel and Hamas and to play a leading role in Sudan and Libya.

The events of the 2011 Arab Spring - during which major public demonstrations and uprisings against autocratic governments took place in many countries in the MENA region - marked the beginning of a period of high political instability in Egypt. In just over two years, both longtime Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his democratically elected successor, Mohammed Morsi, were overthrown by the army following massive public demonstrations. In both cases, the overthrow of the President was accompanied by the approval by referendum of a new constitution, as well as the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections. The current Egyptian President, Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, was elected in 2014, and re-elected in March 2018.

The current constitution, approved in 2014, was amended in April 2019, with significant changes to all three branches of government. These included the reinstatement of the upper house, which was originally created in 1980 and abolished in the 2014 constitution. Elections for the new chamber, the Senate, are slated for 2020.

Since 2014, Egypt has been suffering from a difficult economic climate, significant terrorist threats and strong population growth. These factors have contributed to a substantial reduction in tourism and investment flows, rising inflation, persistent high unemployment and shortages of essential goods. To address these challenges, the Egyptian government has undertaken a series of economic and fiscal reforms, partly as a condition for a 2016 loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Reforms in recent years -

including the introduction of the floating Egyptian currency (Egyptian pound), the introduction of a value-added tax, the reduction of government subsidies for basic necessities such as fuel, and the sale of government assets - have begun yield sustainable economic growth and significant improvements in the government's fiscal situation. The Egyptian government has also enhanced the powers of its security forces, including the armed forces, to fight terrorism, particularly in the Sinai. It has also adopted a development policy, Egypt's national development plan for 2030 (Egypt 2030), which focuses on job creation, encouraging investment and promoting private sector participation. The plan also aims to improve the job skills of young people and to cope with population growth.

Facing a proliferation of terrorist attacks and an armed insurgency in northern Sinai, where ISIS-affiliated groups are active, Egypt has been in a state of emergency since April 2017. In February 2018, the country launched the large-scale "Sinai 2018" operation targeting terrorists, criminal elements and dissident organizations.

Human rights groups have condemned Egypt's human rights situation as the worst in the country's history, noting a weakened judicial system and an increase in arrests and prolonged detention of critics of the government. Religious issues are a priority for President Sisi, who promised to take all necessary measures to protect Coptic Christians from the extremist Islamist threat and to preserve the country's unity against sectarian attacks. Nevertheless, Coptic Christians remain a frequent target of attacks.

Egypt is Canada's 45th bilateral trading partner, and Canada has significant investments in Egypt in the petrochemical, oil and gas sectors. Canada's development assistance programs in Egypt amount to approximately C\$5 million per year and focus on sustainable economic growth, including teaching entrepreneurial skills to women and youth, mitigating the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis and developing a new national strategy for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Canada's development assistance program is closely aligned with the Egypt 2030 plan.

Consular affairs are an important part of Canada's bilateral relations with Egypt. It is estimated that there are about 99,000 people of Egyptian origin in Canada and about 25,000 Canadians in Egypt.

Objectives – Arab Republic of Egypt

The objectives of the visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt were to consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries, promote democratic values and Canadian interests, and share information and best practices in good public governance. The visit also provided an opportunity to discuss issues related to trade and international development, educational cooperation and regional security.

Meetings – Arab Republic of Egypt

During its visit to Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, the delegation met with the following officials:

- His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt;
- His Excellency Dr. Ali Abdel Aal, Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- His Excellency Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- His Excellency Dr. Khaled Atef Abdul Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research;
- His Eminence Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Sheikh of the Al-Azhar University and Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar; and
- His Grace Bishop Daniel, Bishop of Maadi District and Cairo Governorate and Secretary General of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Speaker Furey and the delegation were warmly welcomed at the Presidential Palace by His Excellency Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. President Sisi was pleased to have a Canadian delegation in Egypt and indicated that he was encouraged by the enhanced relations between the two countries. He said that Egypt and Canada enjoy strong political, commercial and social ties and expressed a view that this visit would further build on that bilateral relationship. He also expressed hope for a warm friendship between the two parliaments.

Speaker Furey commended the President's commitment to making difficult economic reforms.

President Sisi explained his vision for Egypt at considerable length, presenting an overview of the extent and scope of the challenges it faces. His Excellency focused on his priorities: economic development and protecting Egypt from terrorism and threats. He explained that Egypt was situated in a turbulent region and that surrounding countries are suffering the consequences of terrorism and increasing instability. He noted that the challenges facing Egypt and the region are significant, highlighting the lack of development, poverty, ignorance and extremism.

His Excellency continued the discussion by commenting on Egypt's long history of tolerance and inclusiveness, explaining that these traditions had eroded over recent years by the permeating ideology of Islamic extremism espoused by the Muslim Brotherhood. However, he noted that there had been considerable progress over the last five years, as a result of the Egyptian people's resilience and desire to improve their country. President Sisi praised the Egyptian people for standing against terrorism and expressed his view that, since the nation rejected the Muslim Brotherhood government, Egypt was moving in a positive direction, notably in terms of religious tolerance.

The discussion concluded with an emphasis on the importance that the Sisi government places on youth and respect for women, identifying education as the key, given Egypt's youthful and expanding demographic. Both Speaker Furey and President Sisi applauded last year's establishment of the University of Canada in Egypt in the New Administrative

Capital. President Sisi noted that 60 percent of Egypt's 100 million population are youth and that the government faces enormous challenges in providing support to young people, for example in the areas of education, medical care, employment opportunities and housing. President Sisi conceded that more needs to be done on women's issues and added that the recent amendments to the Egyptian constitution call for a minimum of 25 percent of parliamentary seats to be held by women.

Meeting with His Excellency Dr. Ali Abdel Aal, Speaker of the House of Representatives

Accompanied by two Deputy Speakers and eight Members of Parliament, His Excellency Dr. Ali Abdel Aal, Speaker of the House of Representatives, welcomed Speaker Furey and the delegation on the steps of Egypt's parliament building and then proceeded to his offices. Speaker Aal called the visit historic, and praised the strong and long-standing relations between Canada and Egypt. He and the other MPs present expressed their hope that this visit will be the start of enhanced cooperation between the two countries by diversifying their bilateral relations and increasing high-level parliamentary exchanges. Speaker Furey indicated that he was delighted to be in Egypt and praised the country's beauty and the warm welcome the delegation had received so far. He offered Speaker Aal and his guests his best wishes for Ramadan.

Speaker Aal gave a brief overview of the political and economic situation in Egypt as well as the constitutional amendments adopted in April 2019, and the changes they will bring to Egypt's current parliamentary system, including reinstatement of the Senate chamber. His Excellency also expressed his hope that the economic reforms undertaken by his government in recent years will have a positive impact on Canadian investments in Egypt, particularly in the mining sector.

As both speakers have a background in education, the conversation turned to Egypt's desire to improve its curricula in order to achieve the highest standards and attract international students. Speaker Furey said that education was an important element of the relationship between Egypt and Canada and that he was very pleased with the creation of the University of Canada in Egypt (UCE), built in Egypt's New Administrative Capital and inaugurated in September 2018, which offers Canadian university degrees in partnership with the University of Prince Edward Island.

The two Speakers then discussed security, with Speaker Aal saying that Egypt's main security concerns are Libya and Sudan and raising the Egyptian government's efforts to counter terrorism and provide stability to citizens, while protecting their rights.

Lastly, Speaker Aal raised the idea of establishing a Canada-Egypt Parliamentary Friendship Association, and Speaker Furey expressed his support for exploring this further. The two men praised the Egyptian-Canadian community, a diaspora estimated by His Excellency to consist of more than 150,000 Egyptians living in Canada.

Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs, welcomed the Canadian delegation in his office. Speaker Furey expressed his enthusiasm for strengthening

bilateral relations between Egypt and Canada, and support for Egypt's effort to promote security in the region. FM Shoukry indicated that he hopes for more high-level engagement by Canada to give new impetus to the bilateral relationship between the two countries and attain more balance from Canada in its foreign policy.

Minister Shoukry echoed President Sisi's concerns with regard to extremism and the Muslim Brotherhood, observing that the West does not fully appreciate their role as a root cause of extremism. Speaker Furey reinforced the importance of tolerance and education in combating terrorism.

Regional issues were also discussed, including Libya. Minister Shoukry provided an overview of Egypt's concerns about the threat to its stability provoked by the turbulence on its western border, stating Egypt's interest in stabilizing the situation and noting that there were too many interlocutors and interests at play. He further noted that the ongoing instability led to Field Marshal Haftar's decision to take action in order to seek an environment of security and stability that would allow for elections.

Meeting with His Excellency Dr. Khaled Atef Abdul Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Speaker Furey and his delegation were warmly welcomed by His Excellency Dr. Khaled Atef Abdul Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and senior officials, including the Deputy Minister and the heads of numerous research centres, ranging from health and human sciences to social studies. Minister Ghaffar spoke effusively about Canadian engagement in the education sector in Egypt and its prestigious reputation, noting with praise the UCE in the New Administrative Capital, as well as the large number of Egyptian students studying Canadian curricula at other institutions in Egypt. He strongly encouraged further collaboration between Egypt and Canada across a wide spectrum of fields of scientific research and academic endeavour. Minister Ghaffar said this kind of knowledge sharing and partnership with Western countries is essential for Egypt's continued development. He noted that there are dozens of new Egyptian universities that have opened over the last year, and that there are more to come. He encouraged Canadian universities to forge links with these new centres.

Minister Ghaffar concluded by describing the exodus of young talent from Egypt, and said more work needs to be done to give Egyptian students who study abroad incentives to return to Egypt and contribute to the country's advancement.

Meeting with His Eminence Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Sheikh of the Al-Azhar University and Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar

His Eminence Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Sheikh of the Al-Azhar University and Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar, welcomed the delegation for a brief meeting. On behalf of the Canadian delegation, Speaker Furey offered, on the occasion of Ramadan, his sincere wishes to the Grand Imam, who warmly welcomed them. Mr. Al-Tayeb gave the delegation an overview of the work of the Al-Azhar Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Cairo, which encourages the moderate practice of Sunni Islam and promotes dialogue between religions. He spoke of a joint initiative of the Al-Azhar Mosque and the Coptic Orthodox Church called "Family House," which was created in 2011 and which was

initially supported by several like-minded countries, including Canada. The objective of the Family House is to bring together Egyptian Muslims and Christians and foster interfaith understanding. It regularly hosts international conferences.

The Grand Imam also explained the role of the Al-Azhar Mosque as the seat of Al-Azhar University, one of the oldest remaining active Islamic universities in the world, which oversees a curriculum with more than two million students. The Grand Imam spoke in very positive terms about Canada, praising the tolerant and inclusive nature of Canada's multicultural society.

Meeting with His Grace Bishop Daniel, Bishop of Maadi District and Cairo Governorate and Secretary General of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Speaker Furey and the delegation were welcomed at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral by Bishop Daniel, the Secretary General of the Holy Synod, and delegate for H.H. Pope Tawadros II. Bishop Daniel and Speaker Furey discussed the Coptic diaspora in Canada and the tremendous contributions this community has made to Canadian society across many fields. Speaker Furey expressed deep condemnation for recent attacks by extremists against Egypt's Christian community.

Following the meeting, the delegation was given a tour of the St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, which is adjacent to the Cathedral, where on December 2016, a suicide bomb attack killed 29 worshippers in the church, most of whom were women and children. Although the damage has been fully repaired, one pillar with shrapnel holes was left behind to memorialize the terrible attack. The wife of the church guard who died tackling the assailant was present in the church at the time of the visit, and the delegation was honoured to speak with her briefly.

Other activities

During its visit to Cairo, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with a group of eminent Egyptians with expertise in areas such as the Egyptian economy, international law, international relations, microfinance, the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and agriculture. In this forum, delegates were able to learn more about the country's current political and economic situation.

The delegation was also given a guided tour of the Egyptian Parliament.

Lastly, Speaker Furey and the delegation experienced a taste of Egyptian culture by visiting the three great pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, where they were able to admire the most iconic monumental remains of Egyptian civilization. The delegates also learned more about the Great Egyptian Museum by visiting the site, which is currently under construction.

Background – Republic of Turkey

The Republic of Turkey is a presidential republic with a unicameral parliament. It is the world's 17th largest economy, a member of the G20, and the third most populous nation in Europe with a population of about 82 million. It is also the European economy with the

youngest population. In 1963, Turkey became an associate member of the European Community and since 2005 the country has been in formal talks on accession to the European Union (EU). Turkey has 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees and more than 365,000 asylum seekers from elsewhere, meaning that it hosts the highest number of refugees in the world.

Turkey's current constitution, promulgated in 1982, has been amended four times by popular vote and fifteen times by legislative measures. The most recent referendum on the constitution was held in April 2017, when the country was in a state of emergency. A slim majority (51.4 percent) of the Turkish electorate voted in favour of constitutional reforms that shifted the country from a parliamentary political system to an executive presidency following the election that returned current president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to power in June 2018. Following his re-election, President Erdoğan cemented his centralized control over Turkey, where he is expected to remain in power until at least 2023. With the constitutional changes, the President has accrued greater unilateral authority with fewer checks and balances from the legislature and judiciary. Under this new system, vice-presidents and ministers report only to the president, not to Parliament, and the position of prime minister has been abolished.

Turkey's history has been punctuated by various military coups and attempted coups. Most recently, on July 15, 2016, an attempted coup against the Erdoğan government resulted in 241 dead and 2,200 injured. The Turkish government claims that the Gülen movement, led by Fethullah Gülen, a U.S.-based imam and former political ally of the AKP, was behind the attempt. A few days later, President Erdoğan declared a state of emergency that would last two years. The Turkish government, like millions of citizens, saw this attempt as a serious and existential threat to Turkish democracy, and government leaders received resounding popular support for bringing those responsible to justice.

"Vision 2023" represents the Turkish Government's ambitious plan for Turkey's economic and social development through 2023 - the Turkish Republic's centennial year. Turkey is a diversified emerging market that has proven its strength in the manufacturing sector, particularly in textiles and automobiles. Its economy has significant long-term potential, although it has faced political and economic challenges in recent years. Given its strategic geographical location and its trade agreements, Turkey offers remarkable access to markets in Europe (including preferential access to the European Union through the Customs Union), the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. Turkey is a priority market in Canada's international education and infrastructure strategies.

In 2018, Turkey was Canada's 23rd largest trading partner. Canada and Turkey have a long history of diplomatic relations. Turkey opened its embassy in Ottawa in 1944, and Canada appointed its first ambassador to Turkey in 1947. Canada and Turkey are both members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the G20, the OSCE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Europe.

In 2018, there was a Turkish diaspora in Canada of more than 65,000, and about 6,000 Canadians resided in Turkey.

Turkey is a priority market for education. The Turkish student community in Canada is currently estimated to be about 3,000.

Objectives – Republic of Turkey

The objectives of the visit were to promote Canada's interests and its democratic values, strengthen parliamentary cooperation and highlight the importance of the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Canada over the past 75 years.

The visit was also an opportunity to develop trade relations, discuss issues related to cooperation and educational opportunities between the two countries, foster a continuing parliamentary dialogue by further promoting parliamentary exchanges, and reaffirm the importance of friendship groups.

Meetings – Republic of Turkey

During its visit to Ankara, Republic of Turkey, the delegation met with:

- His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey;
- His Excellency Mustafa Şentop, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly;
- Mr. Mehmet Ersoy, Minister of Culture and Tourism; and
- Mr. Ziya Selçuk, Minister of National Education.

Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, welcomed Speaker Furey and the delegation to his offices. President Erdoğan spoke of the need for more sustained high-level visits. President Erdoğan emphasized his desire to expand Canada-Turkey trade relations in strategic areas, using the Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) and ultimately working toward a free trade agreement.

Speaker Furey thanked President Erdoğan for Turkey's treatment of refugees and its efforts to combat Islamophobia, and to indicate Canada's readiness to sign the JETCO.

President Erdoğan spoke at length on the terrorist threat of Gülen activities in Turkey and abroad, particularly through cultural and educational institutions. He also expressed his gratitude to Canada for revoking the charity status of the Anatolia Cultural Foundation over links to the PKK.

Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Şentop, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly

Accompanied by a parliamentary delegation, His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Şentop, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly, welcomed Speaker Furey and the delegation in his parliamentary offices.

Speaker Şentop stressed the importance of the two countries' long-standing diplomatic relations, underscoring the opportune timing of the Canadian delegation's visit in terms of strengthening bilateral relations. The two speakers said that these relations are based

on the strong potential for two-way cultural and education exchanges, trade and investment, and shared values and approaches with respect to key regional and global issues, including as a strategic partner of NATO and OSCE. One of the members of the Canadian delegation and member of the Canada-Turkey Parliamentary Friendship Group, said that the group would come to Turkey as soon as possible after Canada's fall election.

Reflecting on the events surrounding the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, His Excellency highlighted Canada's work in the fight against terrorism. He pointed out that terrorist groups were targeting Turkey but that they also had organizations around the world, making it a global problem.

Speaker Sentop expressed his desire to significantly deepen trade relations with Canada, for example through JETCO. He estimated there are nearly 10,000 Turkish students in Canada and expressed a desire to see more Canadian students, teachers and researchers in Turkey. He sees these exchanges as a bridge between two countries.

In closing, Speaker Furey invited Speaker Şentop to visit Canada.

Meeting with Mr. Mehmet Ersoy, Minister of Culture and Tourism

Mr. Mehmet Ersoy, Minister of Culture and Tourism, accompanied by a large delegation from the Ministry and its Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, welcomed the delegation in his offices. Speaker Furey began the meeting by expressing gratitude for Turkey's support on the Gallipoli ceremony in September 2018, calling it an extraordinary act of friendship to Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada.

He then asked Minister Ersoy to share his vision on the path forward for the Tayinat archeological project and a potential future exhibition of Turkish artefacts at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto. Minister Ersoy stated that the excavation and exhibition were completely independent issues, and that obstacles on the former should not block progress towards the latter. He noted that artifacts from Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, which are currently being exhibited in Japan, could be included in the exhibit at the ROM.

Speaker Furey and his delegation drew attention to the immense tourism potential of an archeological exhibition in downtown Toronto, as well as the possible interest across North America, including museums in New York, Washington and Chicago. Speaker Furey noted the potential for the JETCO to be signed at the G20 in Japan in June 2019, which could lead to the development of a working group where cultural cooperation could be discussed. Minister Ersoy closed the meeting by thanking Canada for its positive and objective approach to Turkey.

Meeting with Mr. Ziya Selçuk, Minister of National Education

Mr. Ziya Selçuk, Minister of National Education, met with Speaker Furey and the delegation in the offices of the Ministry of National Education. Minister Selçuk spoke to the importance of establishing a formal framework, namely a bilateral agreement on educational partnership. In response, Speaker Furey noted the potential of the JETCO, which will include an education component. Minister Selçuk also mentioned that Canada

is the top foreign destination for education amongst Turkish students and welcomed the potential for more Canadian students to study in Turkey which he believes would result in long-lasting economic benefit and interdependence in some key sectors.

Lastly, as NATO allies and partners, Minister Selçuk requested Canada's support in their fight against terrorism. He mentioned that the individuals responsible for the July 15, 2016 coup attempt are still free, including some living in Canada.

Other activities

During their stay in the Turkish capital, the delegation visited the Anıtkabir Mausoleum, where they laid a wreath and signed the book of honour. The delegates also visited the Atatürk Museum, which is dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey, and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-22).

Speaker Furey and the delegation also had the opportunity to visit the Grand National Assembly and witnessed the aftermath of the July 2016 bombings that occurred during the attempted coup. They paid tribute to the dead by laying flowers at the site of the aerial attack.

The delegation then travelled to Istanbul to participate in a roundtable discussion with the Canada Turkey Business Council and private sector business leaders in Turkey. The discussions provided greater insight into the challenges and opportunities facing Canadian companies in Turkey.

In Istanbul, the delegates were also able to gain an appreciation of the local culture by briefly visiting various religious, cultural and historic sites, including the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, the Topkapı Palace, the Basilica of Saint Sophia and the Basilica Cistern.

Acknowledgments

The delegation wishes to thank the staff at Global Affairs Canada, the Library of Parliament and the Canadian embassies in the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Turkey for their support, professionalism and help in preparation for and during the visit.

The delegates also wish to thank Global Affairs Canada and the Library of Parliament for the documentation provided as part of the preparation for this visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C.
Speaker of the Senate

Travel Expenses

Visit of the Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate, and a
Parliamentary Delegation, Arab Republic of Egypt and Republic of Turkey,
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TRAVEL	\$ 72,022.40
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,942.59
PROTOCOL	\$ 1,505.61
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 286.13
TOTAL	\$ 76,756.73