

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Great Lakes Day and Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast

Washington, D.C., United States of America

From March 3 to 5, 2020

Report

A. DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 3-5 March 2020, Mr. Vance Badawey, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), and Senator Diane Griffin attended the 2020 Great Lakes Day and the Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast in Washington, D.C. They were accompanied by Mr. Michael Chalupovitsch, advisor to the Canadian Section.

B. THE EVENT

Established in 1955 as an inter-state compact, the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) is a binational group that includes the following Great Lake states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Ontario and Quebec have been associate members since 1999. Jurisdictions appoint delegations of three to five members that include legislators, senior agency officials or appointees of governors or premiers.

The GLC's mission is to represent, assist and advise its member states and provinces through dialogue, consensus, collaboration and speaking with a unified voice to "advance collective interests and responsibilities to promote economic prosperity and environmental protection and to achieve the balanced and sustainable use of Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River basin water resources." ¹

The GLC organizes the annual Great Lakes Day on Capitol Hill, where stakeholders including, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), provincial and state governments, municipalities, and environmental groups meet with Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to discuss Great Lakes issues. The GLC also holds a congressional breakfast where U.S. federal legislators discuss their views on the state of the Great Lakes, and their priorities with respect to the stewardship of the Great Lakes basin. Mr. Vance Badawey, as leader of the delegation, gave closing remarks at the breakfast.

The delegation also held meetings with the Members of the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill, GLC commissioners, the GLFC leadership and founding members of the U.S. Great Lakes Task Force.

In conjunction with this event, the delegation also attended a reception at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the binational nature of the Great Lakes and discuss shared priorities with stakeholders. Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport, gave remarks at the event highlighting Great Lakes cooperation as well as Canadian ballast water management.

C. DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

¹ Great Lakes Commission, [About the Great Lakes Commission](#).

The IPG's Canadian Section has long participated in activities to strengthen the relationship between Canadian parliamentarians and their U.S. counterparts, however, this was the first time that an IPG delegation attended Great Lakes Day events in Washington, D.C. The Canadian Section of the IPG is placing renewed focus on Great Lakes issues with a view towards deepening the partnership between the U.S. and Canada in the management of our shared Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River basin – the largest freshwater watershed in the world. The delegation emphasized the need to view the Great Lakes basin as a single binational economic unit and establish policies that will address the “triple bottom-line” of economic, environmental and socio-cultural issues affecting the basin.

The Canadian delegation also sought to hear best practices on parliamentary engagement on Great Lakes issues, particularly from the U.S. Congressional model of the U.S. Great Lakes Task Force, a bipartisan caucus, founded in the mid-1980s, to strengthen the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes. With an initial membership of 16, the Task Force now includes 14 Senators and 36 Members of the House of Representatives, representing all eight Great Lakes states.

D. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The Canada–U.S. IPG has four key objectives: to find points of convergence in respective national policies; to initiate dialogue on points of divergence; to encourage the exchange of information; and to promote better understanding among Canadian and American legislators on shared issues of concern. Members of the IPG's Canadian Section pursue their goals primarily through meeting with their Congressional counterparts in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Ontario or occasionally in other locations throughout Canada and the United States. In addition, members liaise with U.S. governors and state legislators at national and regional conferences.

E. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

The following activities were held:

- a briefing with members of the Great Lakes Commission;
- a briefing with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the U.S. Great Lakes Task Force;
- meetings with Members of the House of Representatives;
- the Great Lakes Day Reception at the Canadian Embassy; and
- the Great Lakes Day Congressional Breakfast.

Since the Canadian Section's meetings with U.S. federal legislators are held under Chatham House rules, the report below summarizes the general nature of the issues that were raised at these activities by Canadian and American legislators without attribution.

F. BRIEFING WITH MEMBERS OF THE GREAT LAKES COMMISSION

1. Economic and Environmental Integration

The GLC expressed a desire to look for more ways to engage and work with Canadian governments and stakeholders. This would build on the existing positive working relationship between the GLC, the GLFC and the International Joint Commission, which are binational groups. It was noted that a healthy and sustainable ecosystem is necessary for healthy fisheries.

It was noted that the Great Lakes can be a subject area where the IPG can take a greater role, and the Great Lakes region can take greater advantage of contacts through the IPG. It was highlighted that the U.S. Great Lakes Caucus was formed under the auspices of the IPG. This would demonstrate that the Great Lakes are not only an ecosystem, but a uniting factor between the U.S. and Canada.

The Canadian delegation agreed that there is a shared interest in the Great Lakes, and that many Canadians benefit from a healthy Great Lakes basin. For example, Western Canadian shipping companies looking to reach new markets available due to Canada's trade agreements – including the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union, the Canada – United States – Mexico Agreement, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership – benefit from access to the Great Lakes shipping routes.

The Canadian delegation encouraged their U.S. counterparts to view the Great Lakes region as a single, domestic economic market, and that infrastructure investment in the region should be integrated on both sides of the border. The possibility of holding a Great Lakes Day in Ottawa was discussed with the intention of mirroring the events that take place in Washington, D.C., but timed in advance of Canadian pre-budget consultations, which typically occur in the autumn. Another possible symbolic event such as a large binational conference, for example between Ontario and New York State, was also raised. All participants expressed a desire to deepen the relationship between Canada and the U.S. Great Lakes states.

2. Watershed Management and Water Levels

The Canadian delegation noted that the value of the fresh water resources in the Great Lakes will rise in the coming years, underscoring the need to protect and preserve the Great Lakes basin. Great Lakes water levels were discussed, and how there is erroneous information that Canadian shipping interests are to blame for high water levels. It was emphasized that shipping is also important for American communities. The GLC stressed that fresh water needs to be prioritized to the same level as marine water, since siltation, pesticide use and nutrient depletion in fresh water will eventually flow to the marine environment.

G. BRIEFING WITH THE GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION AND THE U.S. GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

1. U.S. Great Lakes Task Force

The U.S. Great Lakes Task Force is a joint House of Representatives and Senate group, acting as a bipartisan working group, under the auspices and with institutional support of the Northeast-Midwest Institute. In 2019, some members of the task force introduced bipartisan legislation to increase funding for the next five years for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The co-chairs of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force are Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow and Ohio Senator Rob Portman. The co-chairs of the House Great Lakes Task Force are Michigan Representatives Debbie Dingell and Bill Huizenga.

2. Great Lakes Fishery Commission

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) was established through the *1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries* between Canada and the United States. The Convention gave the Commission five major duties, namely:

- developing binational research programs to sustain Great Lakes fish stocks;
- coordinating and conducting research on Great Lakes fish stocks;
- recommending measures to protect and improve the fishery;
- formulating a comprehensive sea lamprey control program; and
- publishing scientific information critical to sustaining the fishery.

The Commission is headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan and is led by eight commissioners with four Canadians appointed by the Governor in Council, and four Americans appointed by the President of the United States with an additional U.S. alternate commissioner.

3. Ballast Water Management and Aquatic Invasive Species

The delegation learned about the history of the founding of the U.S. Great Lakes Task Force from the staff of its founding members. The initial impetus for its formation was the need to regulate ballast water and aquatic invasive species – particularly zebra mussels and Eurasian ruffe – which at one point had shut down operations of a nuclear power plant in the U.S. The meeting was therefore dominated by aquatic invasive species and ballast water management.

Seaway authorities are calling to harmonize ballast water regulations – under the jurisdiction of Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard - to level the playing field. However, there is little optimism on the U.S. side due to the Transport Canada's more aggressive regulations.

Transport Canada published its proposed ballast water regulations in the *Canada Gazette*, which extends ballast water regulation to freshwater environments – including the Great Lakes – and would apply to U.S. ships under Canadian jurisdiction (except those transiting Canadian waters while travelling between two U.S. ports). These regulations are intended to fulfil Canada's international obligations under the *International*

Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, which entered into force in 2017.

According to the Regulatory Impact Statement included in the Canada Gazette, one of the primary goals of the proposed regulations is to: “maximize compatibility with the differing and evolving United States ballast water regime; and mitigate, to the extent feasible, technical uncertainty associated with the [*International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments*], notably in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River region.”²

Meeting participants emphasized that the biggest concern is now the transportation of aquatic invasive species to the upper Great Lakes from already established populations in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie through ballast water from lakers,³ an issue that the Great Lakes Research Collaborative is working on. Some potential solutions include subsidizing the costs for lining the ballast tanks of lakers, similar to the subsidization of the Asian Carp barrier near Chicago. Meeting participants indicated that land-based ballast water solutions have been shown to be cost prohibitive in this regard.

It was suggested to the delegation that any proposals for U.S. regulatory change be framed as regulatory alignment, since that may be viewed more favourably than the term “harmonization.” At the Great Lakes Day reception hosted by the Canadian Embassy, Minister Garneau spoke of ballast water management and the need to work together with U.S. partners for the benefit of the basin.

The Canadian delegation discussed the possibility of establishing a Canadian Great Lakes Task Force under the auspices of the IPG to strengthen discussions with U.S. counterparts in the development of Great Lakes action plans.

H. MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

In meetings with Members of the House of Representatives, the Canadian delegation discussed high water levels and climate change in the Great Lakes Basin, and emphasized that Canada is fully engaged in the economic, environmental and social health of the basin. Examples given included work on science initiatives at Niagara College and Brock University, investments in skilled trades and strengthening binational multimodal trade corridors.

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives discussed the bipartisan effort to restore funding to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and how it is hard to conceptualize the importance of the Great Lakes to people who are not from the region.

U.S. legislators noted that the U.S. is meeting its funding obligations to the GLFC, but that Canada is catching up.

² “[Ballast Water Regulations](#),” *Canada Gazette Part I*, Vol. 153, No. 23, 8 June 2019.

³ Lakers are freight vessels that operate solely within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Other issues raised by the U.S. legislators included border crossing congestion and groundwater contamination caused by perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acids (PFOA).⁴

I. GREAT LAKES DAY CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST

The Great Lakes Day Congressional Breakfast brought together federal legislators, state officials, environmental groups, and military officers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A number of U.S. legislators spoke at the breakfast, some of which are highlighted below. Other legislators who gave brief remarks include: Michigan Representative Jack Bergman, Indiana Senator Mike Braun, Illinois Representative Brad Schneider, New York Representative Joe Morelle, Indiana Senator Todd Young, New York Representative Bill Higgins and Ohio Representative David Joyce. Nearly all the speakers spoke of the bipartisan nature of Congressional support for Great Lakes issues, pointing in particular to the legislation passed by the House of Representatives reauthorizing and increasing funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) after it was initially defunded by the Trump administration.

Mr. Badawey spoke on behalf of the Canadian delegation. He recognized the work being done by U.S. legislators as well as by organizations such as the GLC and the GLFC. He expressed his desire to establish a Great Lakes Task Force in Canada, which would work towards action plans to address the triple bottom line of environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues affecting the Great Lakes basin. He noted that Canada, through the IPG, is deepening its engagement with the U.S. Great Lakes states, and to expect a greater Canadian presence at Great Lakes events.

American speakers also spoke of cooperation with Canada, with Michigan Representative Bill Huizenga expressing approval the establishment of a Canadian Great Lakes Task Force and working in coordination with Canada as it addresses the “triple bottom line” of environmental, economic and socio-cultural concerns with respect to the Great Lakes. Michigan Representative Debbie Dingell also commended projects such as the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, jointly managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

1. Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species pose a major threat to the Great Lakes. Prominent examples include the zebra mussel, which was introduced through ballast water, sea lamprey, which is currently being controlled by the GLFC, and Asian carp, which threaten to enter the Great Lakes basin through the Chicago Area Water System. Canada cooperates with the U.S. on aquatic invasive species prevention and management through the GLFC, as well as through a partnership with the U.S. “to prevent the spread of AIS [aquatic invasive

⁴ These toxic substances are regulated under the *Prohibition of Certain Toxic Substances Regulations, 2012*, and further proposed amendments that will phase out their substances manufacture and use will be published in the *Canada Gazette* in the autumn of 2020. Government of Canada, [“Proposed amendments to the Prohibition of Certain Toxic Substances Regulations, 2018 consultation document: chapter 2.”](#)

species] in the Great Lakes through the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC).”⁵

At the breakfast, Ohio Senator Rob Portman noted that his own state of Ohio uses Lake Erie for drinking water and fishery valued a US\$7-8 billion, but aquatic invasive species and microbeads⁶ remain a major threat. Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow called for increased funding for an Asian carp mitigation plan, while Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin expressed concerns about Asian carp hitchhiking on barges.

2. Environmental Concerns

Participants at the breakfast noted several environmental concerns affecting the Great Lakes. Congressional participants discussed the example of the Deep Geologic Repository to store nuclear waste at an Ontario Power Generation facility in Kincardine, Ontario. Senator Stabenow called for the project to be cancelled given its proximity to the Great Lakes. Michigan Representative Dan Kildee commended the work of the Saugeen First Nation in opposing the site and urged Canada to change its practices with respect to storing nuclear waste. Minnesota Senator Tina Smith also called for greater recognition of Indigenous connections to the Great Lakes.

Senator Baldwin spoke about harmful algal blooms and groundwater contamination. Several other speakers, including Representative Dingell and Michigan Representative Andy Levin, spoke of the threat to groundwater caused by PFOSs and PFOAs. There was a consensus that federal resources and initiatives must incorporate local knowledge in tackling these issues.

Michigan Senator Gary Peters expressed his opposition to the Line 5 pipeline connecting Michigan’s Upper Peninsula through “mainland” Michigan into Sarnia, Ontario, due to the risk of spills. He noted that it is harder to clean up oil spills in fresh water than in marine water. He called for the establishment of a centre of excellence for oil spill clean-ups in the Great Lakes in partnership with academia. Ohio Representative Marcy Kaptur called for a Great Lakes resiliency study to be undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a call echoed by Senator Stabenow who explained that the Great Lakes are warming faster than the oceans.

3. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was first established in 2004 by the George W. Bush administration to coordinate interagency, federal-state and binational efforts “to support local and regional efforts to address environmental challenges and to encourage

⁵ Fisheries and Oceans Canada, “[Funding and Collaboration – Aquatic Invasive Species](#),” *Scientific research and collaboration*.

⁶ Microbeads are synthetic polymer particles that, at the time of their manufacture, are greater than 0.1 µm and less than or equal to 5 mm in size, which can vary in chemical composition, size, shape, density, and function. Environment and Climate Change Canada, “[Microbeads – A Science Summary](#),” July 2015.

local citizen and community stewardship.”⁷ Since 2010, the GLRI has been providing funding to 16 federal agencies to achieve the following goals for the Great Lakes:

- Maintain fish that are safe to eat.
- Maintain water that is safe for recreation.
- Continue to be a safe source of drinking water.
- All areas of concern delisted.⁸
- Eliminate harmful/nuisance algal blooms.
- Prevent new self-sustaining invasive species.
- Control existing invasive species controlled.
- Protect and restore native habitat to sustain native species.⁹

During the breakfast Senator Stabenow noted that over 800 GLRI projects have been funded in Michigan, and a reauthorization of the GLRI and an increase in funding is required. Senator Portman called for an increase in public-private partnerships in GLRI projects. Senator Baldwin condemned cuts to funding for Great Lakes issues in the Trump administration’s latest budget.

4. Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway

The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway is managed as a binational partnership between Canada and the U.S. to manage shipping through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Canadian portions are managed through the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (a Crown corporation), and the U.S. St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (an agency of the United States Department of Transportation).

Major issues raised included the need for more funding for the construction of an additional lock in Sault Ste Marie, Michigan. This funding was supported by Senator Stabenow, who noted that there was a US\$50 million shortfall in the budget released by the Trump administration for the project. Michigan Representative Bill Huizenga explained that he raised this issue with President Trump and believes that it will ultimately be fully funded.

Senator Baldwin also raised the issue of icebreaking capabilities on the Great Lakes, and the need for a second heavy icebreaker. Representative Kaptur also expressed concern about the high-water levels and noted that a basin-wide perspective is needed to address

⁷ Federal Register, “[Executive Order 13340 of May 18, 2004, Establishment of Great Lakes Interagency Task Force and Promotion of a Regional Collaboration of National Significance for the Great Lakes](#),” Vol. 69, No. 98, 20 May 2004.

⁸ These are locations within the Great Lakes identified as having experienced high levels of environmental harm. Environment and Climate Change Canada, “[Great Lakes: Areas of Concern](#),” 2014.

⁹ U.S. Government, Great Lakes Restoration, [About](#).

the choke points on the St. Lawrence River. Choke points on the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway include the Welland Canal and the Port of Montreal which allow for transport of goods between the Great Lakes and between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean respectively.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Hon. Wayne Easter, P.C., M.P., Co-Chair
Canada–United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Great Lakes Day and Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., United States
DATES	March 3 to 5, 2020
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Diane Griffin
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Vance Badawey
STAFF	Michael Chalupovitsch
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 5,661.99
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 3,828.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 593.72
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 10,083.71