

Canada – United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada – États-Unis
Section canadienne

Report of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

Annual Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures

Denver, Colorado, United States of America

August 1–3, 2022

REPORT

A. MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION AND STAFF

From 1–3 August 2022, the Honourable Senator Michael L. Macdonald, Co-Chair of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (Canadian Section), led a delegation at the [Annual Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures](#) (NCSL), which was held in Denver, Colorado. The delegation included Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, as well as Members of Parliament Chandra Arya, Hon. David McGuinty, P.C., Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay and Jamie Schmale. The delegation was accompanied by David Chandonnet, the executive secretary of the Canadian Section, and Sarah Lemelin-Bellerose, the advisor for the Canadian Section.

B. THE SUMMIT

The NCSL, which was founded in 1975, is a bipartisan organization that serves legislators and legislative staff in the 50 U.S. states and U.S. territories and freely associated states. It provides research and technical assistance, in addition to serving as a venue for the exchange of ideas on state issues. It also advocates for state interests before the U.S. Congress and federal agencies.

The NCSL is governed by an executive committee and has eight standing committees in which legislators participate. The committees are as follows:

- Budgets and Revenue
- Communications, Financial Services and Interstate Commerce
- Education
- Health and Human Services
- Labor and Economic Development
- Law, Criminal Justice and Public Safety
- Natural Resources and Infrastructure
- Legislators also serve in the following eight NCSL task forces:
 - Agriculture
 - Cybersecurity
 - Energy Supply
 - Immigration and the States
 - Innovations in State Health Systems
 - Insurance
 - Military and Veterans Affairs
 - State and Local Taxation

C. SUMMIT ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DELEGATION

There were presentations on many topics during the 2022 Legislative Summit. A number of these subjects were relevant to Canada. The delegates from the Canadian Section also gleaned information that will help inform their work as legislators. The summit meetings generally revolve around topics such as agriculture, trade, economic development, rural development, employment, energy, the environment, taxation, immigration, criminal justice, pensions, natural resources, health, financial services, information technology and transportation. This year, the delegates participated in sessions on rural connectivity, the use of advanced technology to build a balanced grid, infrastructure development, human trafficking, methods used by some states to strengthen elections, U.S. economic trends, and why women choose to run for office.

The members of the Canadian Section spoke with various state legislators on a wide range of topics at the NSCL Annual Legislative Summit, during which they were able to gain insight into shared policy issues, engage in dialogue about disputes, foster the sharing of information and speak about shared issues. Meetings with these legislators are also an excellent opportunity for the members of the Canadian Section to share their thoughts on American issues that have an impact on Canada.

The Canadian Section not only participated in information sessions for U.S. legislators, but it also met with Sylvain Fabi, the Consul General of Canada to the United States, in Denver, as well as his team, in their office. The Consulate General of Canada to the United States, in Denver, provides services to Canadians in five U.S. states: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Utah and Wyoming. The Canadian Section and the team at the Canadian consulate in Denver spoke about the important role that Canadian consulates play across the United States and around the world. These consulates provide assistance to Canadians living and travelling abroad. They also work to strengthen trade and economic ties; foster political, academic and cultural collaboration; and showcase all that Canada has to offer. The Canadian Section also had the opportunity to visit the Colorado State Capitol to learn about how political institutions in this state operate.

The following section summarizes the discussions that took place during certain sessions.

1. SESSION ON USING ADVANCED ENERGY TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD A BALANCED GRID

a. Franek Hasiuk, Associate Scientist, Kansas Geological Survey

- The energy transition is already under way and should be viewed as an opportunity. The energy transition has four key elements: energy storage; the hydrogen economy; critical minerals; and carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS).

1. Burning fossil fuels is not the problem; the problem lies in the carbon emissions that these fuels generate. CCUS technologies can eliminate carbon emissions. They could be used in places that emit large quantities of carbon, such as industrial facilities. CCUS can also be used to capture carbon directly from the atmosphere. Once captured, carbon can be transported in different ways, but pipelines are the safest and most economical way to do so. Some pipelines currently transporting oil could be modified to transport captured carbon. The captured carbon could be stored underground, for example, in existing oil and natural gas fields that already have infrastructure, or in saltwater aquifers, which are more abundant but are less well known geologically.

- The captured carbon could also be used in a carbon economy. For example, the carbon could be used for fizzy drinks, advanced agriculture, advanced chemicals for dry cleaning, or for stronger concrete.

2. Many issues surrounding the development of CCUS technologies will need to be addressed by state legislatures, which can implement measures to encourage the development of these technologies. For example, the California Low Carbon Fuel Standard is a significant incentive to develop this industry in California, and it provides up to \$200 per tonne of carbon stored.

b. Marcus Nichol, Senior Director, New Reactors, Nuclear Energy Institute

- Firm, low-carbon energy generation, such as nuclear energy, enables affordable decarbonization. Nuclear energy is also a reliable energy source. According to 2022 data, 50% of emissions-free electricity in the U.S. came from nuclear energy. The United States has 92 reactors at 53 plant sites across the country, primarily in the eastern U.S.

3. Technological advances could help expand the versatility of energy options. There are several sizes of reactors. For example, micro reactors (less than 20 MW) can be installed in remote regions and be self-sustained. Nuclear energy can also have a variety of outputs, such as electricity, hydrogen and process heat. Nuclear energy also has a number of uses, for example, in homes, in low-emission vehicles, in marine shipping, and in factories.

- Nuclear energy developed today is one of the safest sources of energy in the world and is designed to prevent the type of disasters we have seen in the past. Safety and lower costs go hand in hand in the development of advanced reactors.

4. The U.S. government has adopted an aggressive approach to support the deployment of nuclear energy, an approach that has drawn bipartisan support. Federal programs offer tax credits and loan guarantees and also involve federal power purchase agreements. U.S. states are also implementing measures to incentivize the adoption of nuclear energy, including tax incentives and advanced cost recovery. Plans for advanced nuclear deployment are growing. There are currently 20 projects in the U.S. and Canada expected to be deployed by 2030.

c. Noah Roberts, Director of Energy Storage, American Clean Power Association

- Energy storage enables us to capture energy when it is abundant, store it, and put it back into the power grid when it is needed. This helps minimize power outages, lowers costs for consumers, provides a more flexible and resilient power grid, accelerates decarbonization and boosts local economies. Energy storage can be used across the United States, regardless of climate.

5. In 2010, pumped-hydro electricity accounted for 90% of stored energy, but there are other energy storage methods, including electrochemical (batteries), thermal and hydrogen.

- The American storage strategy supports 6,000 jobs in the U.S.

6. Legislators can spur development of the energy storage sector in a number of ways, such as:

- o Implement deployment targets, which some states, including California, Connecticut, Oregon, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York and Virginia have already done.
- o Implement incentives, which some states, including California, Connecticut, Oregon, Massachusetts, Maryland and New York have already done.
- o Carry out system planning reform, which Colorado, Minnesota and New Mexico have already done.
- o Permit certain reforms, for example, streamline energy storage permitting at existing generation facilities and expedite permitting on brownfield sites.

2. INFORMATION SESSION ON STATE BROADBAND EXPANSION

a. Angie Cooper, Chief Program Officer, Heartland Forward; Kathryn de Wit, Project Director, Broadband Access Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts; and Nate Denny, Deputy Secretary, Broadband and Digital Equity Division, North Carolina Department of Information Technology

- Broadband Internet is a necessity, not a luxury, since it is required for people to work, study and access services, such as health care, virtually. The U.S. government has announced some significant investments over the past year in deploying broadband Internet across the country. Panellists from different states discussed how their respective states are using these government resources to help close the digital divide.

7. The panellists acknowledged that the lack of access to broadband Internet is not the only factor contributing to the digital divide. Affordability and digital literacy are two other important factors in closing this divide. If broadband Internet becomes accessible to all but some people are not able to afford the service or do not know how to access the resources available on broadband Internet, the money that governments have invested to narrow the digital divide will be for naught.

- The panellists also acknowledged that it is important for legislators across the country to have more regular contact with industry stakeholders to discuss progress on their shared goal and learn about each other's needs and accomplishments.

b. Kathryn de Wit, Project Director, Broadband Access Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts

- Although the lack of access to broadband Internet is an issue across the United States, legislatures have a responsibility to address this issue within their own states, which have their own unique characteristics. The federal government must seek feedback from states when implementing programs to ensure that these programs will be helpful to the communities for which they are designed, since states are most familiar with their own unique realities. States must also be able to participate in data collection to identify and map the availability of broadband Internet services across the country.

8. The U.S. federal government has allocated a lot of funding to closing the digital divide in the past year. For example, the American Rescue Plan is, for the first time, providing targeted funding to the United States to close the digital divide. Funding is also available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. These funding mechanisms demand greater accountability and monitoring of federal programs to ensure that stakeholders use the funds for solutions that will be effective in the long term.

c. Nate Denny, Deputy Secretary, Broadband and Digital Equity Division, North Carolina Department of Information Technology

- Although fibre optic is often the preferred technology in funding programs because of its advantages, it is not the technology of choice in all regions across the country. The geography and population density in some regions might make fibre-optic technology a less appropriate solution. Stakeholders should find creative ways to close the digital divide in areas that are difficult to get connected.

3. DISCUSSION ON THE AFFORDABILITY OF BROADBAND INTERNET

a. Drew Garner, State Broadband Policy Advisor, Common Sense

- The affordability of broadband Internet is a very important factor in ensuring that everyone has access to broadband Internet infrastructure built with government funds. Programs should also consider the affordability of devices, since these costs could be prohibitive for certain groups. A survey showed that 68% of non- and under-connected broadband Internet users in the United States cite the cost of devices as the barrier (in both rural and urban areas).

9. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the Affordable Connectivity program, which gives eligible families Internet access for \$30 a month. Families can also obtain a low-cost device through the program. However, just one-quarter of eligible families use the program. This is because the program is not well known, is not advertised in areas that are accessible to families not connected to the Internet and families must enrol online, which limits access and discourages some families that could benefit from this program.

- To increase enrolment, the FCC could advertise the program across recognized agencies, for example, through a texting campaign rather than an online one; designing a website that is accessible on mobile devices; introducing a direct phone line; and providing local support and tailored resources.

10. It is important to note that the grants are short-term solutions and will not create long-term affordability of broadband Internet. Increased competition in telecommunications services could help address the affordability issue in the long term.

4. AMERICAN IRISH STATE LEGISLATORS CAUCUS MEETING

a. Mark Daly, Chair of the Irish Senate

- The Canadian Section also attended the meeting of the bipartisan American Irish State Legislators Caucus, which is open to the Irish living in Ireland, Americans of Irish heritage and supporters of Ireland. Mark Daly, the Chair of the Irish Senate, acknowledged the presence of the Canadian Section during the meeting and spoke about how important in-person meetings are to building strong relationships and better understanding the challenges we all face.

5. PRESENTATION ON NASA'S ARTEMIS PROGRAM

a. Matthew Dominick, NASA Astronaut, Artemis Program

- NASA's Artemis program has the objective of returning humans to the moon in 2024. As part of this program, NASA is building the most powerful rocket in the world. This

program relies on international co-operation to meet its objectives, including the participation of the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency. Canada is contributing a smart robotic system to Gateway, the space station that will orbit around the moon.

11. Co-operation in space transcends differences and conflicts among countries on Earth, since we all live on just one planet.

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	Annual Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures
DESTINATION	Denver, Colorado, United States of America
DATES	August 1-3, 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michael L. MacDonald Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. David McGuinty, P.C. Chandra Arya Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay Jamie Schmale
STAFF	David Chandonnet, Association Secretary Sarah Lemelin-Bellerose, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$13,324.76
ACCOMMODATION	\$10,289.63
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$4,068.54
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$6,723.74
TOTAL	\$34,406.67