



Canada - China Legislative Association
Association législative Canada - Chine



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

**Report of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group**

**31st Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum
(APPF)**

Manila, Philippines

From November 23 to 26, 2023

Report

From 23–26 November 2023, Senator Stan Kutcher, Co-Chair of the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group (CAJP), led a delegation to the 31st Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) in Manila, the Philippines. The delegation also comprised the following parliamentarians who are members of either the Canada–China Legislative Association (CCLA) or the CAJP: Senator Paul Massicotte, Co-Chair of the CCLA; Han Dong, MP, Co-Chair of the CCLA; Terry Sheehan, MP, Co-Chair of the CAJP; Senator Victor Oh; Senator Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler; and Yves Perron, MP.

The delegation was accompanied by Grant McLaughlin, Association Secretary, and Geneviève Gosselin, Advisor.

OVERVIEW OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

Since the early 1990s, the APPF has brought together legislators from 28 countries across the Asia-Pacific region¹ to discuss issues of common concern to the region, to deepen their understanding of both the region and its diverse countries, to advance regional cooperation and to build relationships. The APPF's proceedings primarily address political, security, economic, social and cultural issues

The host parliament functions as the APPF's secretariat for a one-year term. One of the host parliament's key responsibilities is developing the draft agenda for the annual meeting, which is the APPF's "highest decision-making" body. The annual meeting involves plenary debates on a variety of topics, and concludes with the adoption of a joint communiqué and resolutions on the topics. Typically, these topics are related to: political and security matters; economic and trade matters; regional development cooperation; and women parliamentarians

The APPF's executive committee comprises one representative each from the current host parliament, the immediately previous host parliament and the host parliament for the next annual meeting, as well as one representative each from two countries that are elected for each sub-region; Canada currently sits on the executive committee as one of the two representatives for the Americas. The executive committee creates a drafting committee to prepare a draft joint communiqué and final draft resolutions; the drafting committee comprises representatives from the delegations attending the annual meeting. Before being considered by the drafting committee, the draft resolutions submitted by the various delegations are discussed in working groups that convene during the annual meeting. The final resolutions, which are adopted on a consensual basis, and the joint communiqué are approved in a final plenary session

THE 31ST ANNUAL MEETING

¹ Currently, the national parliaments of the following 28 states are members of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum: Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Ecuador; Fiji; Indonesia; Japan; Laos; Malaysia; the Marshall Islands; Mexico; Micronesia; Mongolia; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; the People's Republic of China; Peru; the Philippines; Russia; Singapore; South Korea; Thailand; the United States; and Viet Nam.

The co-hosts of the APPF's 31st Annual Meeting were Senator Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, President of the Philippines' Senate, and Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Speaker of the Philippine's House of Representatives. The annual meeting was attended by more than 260 delegates from 19 member parliaments: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam. Representatives of the United Nations (UN) and the UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health also attended the annual meeting.

The theme for the 31st Annual Meeting was "Resilient Partnerships for Peace, Prosperity and Sustainability." In addition to the meeting of the executive committee, the program of activities included plenary sessions during which delegates debated various aspects of that theme, meetings of the working groups and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians – which functions like a working group and also has a plenary session – to discuss draft resolutions, and a final plenary session to adopt the joint communiqué and the final resolutions

In addition to Senate President Zubiri and House Speaker Romualdez, Thailand's Senate President and host of the APPF's 30th Annual Meeting – Pornpetch Wichitcholchai – made opening remarks

Throughout the annual meeting, the Canadian delegates discussed matters pertinent to Canadian public policy and their four draft resolutions:

- Combatting Transnational Crimes;
- Rethinking Critical Infrastructure;
- Fostering Regional Cooperation through Education and Culture; and
- Women's Participation and Leadership.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION

A. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Senate President Zubiri and House Speaker Romualdez co-chaired the executive committee. Because Canada is one of two representatives on the executive committee for the Americas sub-region, Senator Kutcher and Yves Perron attended the executive committee's meeting. It met to approve the agenda and program of activities for the 31st Annual Meeting.

The executive committee was informed about the attendance at the annual meeting of representatives of the UN Philippines and the UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health. The executive committee agreed to refer 36 of the 37 draft resolutions submitted by delegations from 10 member parliaments to the appropriate working groups and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians for examination; the host parliament combined resolutions on the same topic to create 10 joint draft resolutions. Moreover, the executive committee agreed to defer the draft resolution submitted by the delegation from the Russian Federation on "Combatting Glorification of Nazism, Neo-nazism, and Other Discrimination Practices" to the 32nd Annual Meeting.

The executive committee was also made aware of the Philippine delegation's proposal to amend the APPF's Rules of Procedure to include the Meeting of Young Parliamentarians as a regular event during the annual meeting. A decision about the proposal was referred to the drafting committee.

B. PLENARY SESSIONS

1. SESSION 1: POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS

Two themes were discussed during the plenary session on political and security matters:

- strengthening the capacity of parliaments to promote peace and stability; and
- combatting transnational crimes.

Senator Oh underscored the importance of parliamentary dialogue in building peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. Mentioning that information and communications technologies have transformed modern life and stimulated innovation, Senator Oh noted that cyber threats to international peace and security have also emerged, with the actors, motives and tools involved in these threats both proliferating at a high speed and constantly evolving; consequently, continuous vigilance and ongoing efforts are required. As well, Senator Oh recognized the measures that countries have implemented to address cyber crimes and to combat the malicious use of cyberspace, but pointed out that there is still much work to be done, particularly in relation to protecting vulnerable populations in cyberspace.

2. SESSION 2: ECONOMIC AND TRADE MATTERS

Two themes were discussed during the plenary session on economic and trade matters:

- rethinking critical infrastructure; and
- human capital development and inclusive growth.

Senator Oh explained that critical infrastructure supports the safety, security, health and economic well-being of citizens in all countries, as well as the effective functioning of governments. Acknowledging that risks to critical infrastructure are constantly evolving and can arise from a range of sources, Senator Oh stressed that improving the resilience of critical infrastructure requires not only partnerships within countries, but also across countries, including through initiatives aimed at promoting international collaboration and coordination. Senator Oh also noted that critical infrastructure has been an important area of focus for the UN, with Sustainable Development Goal 9 of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mentioning "quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure."

3. SESSION 3: REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Two themes were discussed during the plenary session on regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region:

- regional cooperation through education and culture; and

- universal health care in the Asia-Pacific region.

Senator Oh identified education and culture as the backbone of every society. Underlining the need to ensure that everyone has access to education, Senator Oh also stated that a particular focus should be vulnerable populations' access to educational fields where they are often underrepresented, such as science, engineering, technology and mathematics. Moreover, Senator Oh encouraged APPF member states to increase their support for academic and scientific exchanges, noting that the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's education strategy for 2016–2030 includes a commitment to promote “cross-border education” and “academic mobility.” Finally, Senator Oh asserted that access to reliable information and freedom of cultural expression are key prerequisites for knowledge, innovation and global well-being.

4. MEETING OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Two themes were discussed during the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians:

- gender and Sustainable Development Goals; and
- women's participation and leadership.

Senator Osler advocated full and equal participation for women in all aspects of political, economic and social life, consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5's objective to attain gender equality and empower all women and girls. Stressing that parliamentarians have a role to play in addressing the challenges associated with women's participation and leadership, Senator Osler drew attention to the need to ensure the availability of accessible and affordable child care, and encouraged the implementation of policies and measures to eliminate violence against women online, as well as in public and private settings. Finally, Senator Osler called for actions to be taken to ensure that women are aware of – and have barrier-free access to – education, training and mentorship opportunities.

C. THE CANADIAN DELEGATION'S DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

1. COMBATTING TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES

The Canadian delegation's draft resolution entitled “Combatting Transnational Crimes” underscored that legislatures and legislators have a role to play in national, regional and international actions designed to combat transnational crimes, particularly cybercrimes. Therefore, it encouraged the implementation of national legislation and policy frameworks concerning responsible behaviour by APPF member states and other actors in cyberspace, and promoted cooperative approaches in such areas as: combatting the growing number and complexity of transnational crimes; and addressing the negative impacts of these crimes, notably on the safety of citizen and international peace and security. The draft resolution also advocated enhanced protection for vulnerable populations in cyberspace, and promoted partnerships among APPF member states, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders with the goals of fostering a cybersecurity ecosystem consistent with democratic values and contributing to the development of a culture of cybersecurity among citizens.

2. RETHINKING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Canadian delegation's draft resolution entitled "Rethinking Critical Infrastructure" drew attention to the role that legislatures and legislators play in ensuring the protection and resiliency of critical infrastructure, including through the development of legislation and strategies aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and reinforcing emergency preparedness. In particular, it mentioned strengthening information and communication technology systems that are essential to the operations of critical infrastructure. The draft resolution also recommended that consideration should be given to both the impacts of climate change on critical infrastructure and the appropriate ways to adapt to climate change. In that regard, it encouraged the adoption of a "build back better" approach to reconstructing and rehabilitating critical infrastructure affected by disasters.

3. FOSTERING REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The Canadian delegation's draft resolution entitled "Fostering Regional Cooperation through Education and Culture" highlighted that education and culture are important contributors to social and economic development, and recognized that the former is also an effective tool for combatting disinformation that challenges the health, wealth and humanity of nations. It emphasized the need to ensure access to education for all, and encouraged governments to take actions to counter the losses that students experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the draft resolution called for increased support for academic and scientific exchanges through scholarships and other financial incentives. As well, it argued that concrete actions should be taken to promote and protect cultural diversity, and to safeguard heritage sites of cultural significance.

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Canadian delegation's draft resolution entitled "Women's Participation and Leadership" recognized that women's full and equal participation in economic, political and public life can reinforce social cohesion, peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and globally. It promoted the implementation of specific measures, such as awareness campaigns, that encourage women's participation and leadership in economic, political and public life, as well as the use of gender-mainstreaming throughout all legislative work and structures. The draft resolution also encouraged the inclusion of intersectional considerations – such as ethnicity, race, age, disability and sexual orientation – in the development of measures aimed at increasing women's participation and leadership, with the goal of ensuring that those who may experience barriers due to multiple identity factors are properly supported.

D. WORKING GROUPS

1. POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS

Delegations from Canada, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation submitted draft resolutions on the topic of combatting transnational crimes. The Canadian delegation's draft resolution focused on cybercrimes, with those of the other delegations addressing a wider range of transnational crimes, including human, organ and drug

trafficking. Senator Massicotte and Senator Oh succeeded in having many of the preambulatory clauses and most of the operative clauses contained in the Canadian delegation's draft resolution included in the draft joint resolution on combatting transnational crimes. In discussing the draft joint resolution, they reaffirmed the importance of protecting human rights.

The working group also examined a joint draft resolution on the topic of strengthening the capacity of parliaments to promote regional peace and stability, which included clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the delegations from Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines and the Russian Federation. Senator Massicotte and Senator Oh advocated retaining preambulatory and operative clauses that support a rules-based international order for the oceans and seas, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Finally, the working group discussed a joint draft resolution on the topic of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The joint draft resolution comprised the clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the delegations from Japan and South Korea.

2. ECONOMIC AND TRADE MATTERS

Three delegations submitted draft resolutions on the topic of rethinking critical infrastructure. Those submitted by the Canadian and Australian delegations were very similar, with that from the Philippines delegation referring to the "principles of the green and blue economy" and natural capital accounting. Senator Osler and Terry Sheehan succeeded in having almost all of the preambulatory and operative clauses contained in the Canadian delegation's draft resolution included in the joint draft resolution. As well, they were successful in opposing references to infrastructure projects specific to a country or a region, pointing out that such references would make the joint draft resolution less inclusive.

The working group also studied a joint draft resolution on the topic of human capital development and inclusive growth that included clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the delegations from Mexico and the Russian Federation. With the goal of achieving mutually acceptable language, Senator Osler and Terry Sheehan contributed to the discussions about numerous clauses relating to trade, education and sustainable development. As well, they succeeded with their efforts to exclude proposed wording by delegation from the Russian Federation that suggested "removing barriers" in relation to trade and economic cooperation.

Finally, the working group examined a joint draft resolution on the topic of climate action, biodiversity conservation and disaster risk reduction, which included clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the delegations from Japan and the Philippines.

3. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Delegations from Australia, Canada, the Philippines and the Russian Federation submitted draft resolutions on the topic of regional cooperation through education and culture. Many of the clauses contained in the Canadian delegation's draft resolution were

included in the joint draft resolution. Han Dong discussed various clauses addressing women's access to education, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, and international cooperation on the sharing of knowledge and skills. In particular, Han Dong succeeded in having text included that affirms the contribution that international cooperation in education and culture can make to the development of solutions to climate change-related challenges.

The working group also examined a joint draft resolution on the topic of regional cooperation on universal health care. It included clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the delegations from Mexico and the Philippines.

4. MEETING OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Delegations from five countries submitted draft resolutions on the topic of women's participation and leadership: Australia, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines and the Russian Federation. Senator Osler succeeded in having most of the concepts outlined in the Canadian delegation's draft resolution included in the joint draft resolution. As well, with the goal of promoting gender equality, Senator Osler participated in many discussions about the clauses proposed by the other delegations' draft resolutions.

The working group also examined a joint draft resolution on the topic of gender and Sustainable Development Goals, whose text reflected the draft resolutions submitted by delegations from Chile, Japan, Mexico and the Philippines. Senator Osler expressed concerns about the proposed deletion of language in an operative clause that would recognize the impact of climate change on women and girls, and succeeded with efforts to have the language retained in the joint draft resolution.

E. DRAFTING COMMITTEE

The drafting committee, which comprised members from a number of countries' delegations, finalized the text of the 10 joint draft resolutions referred to it by the three working groups and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. At various times, Senator Kutcher, Senator Osler and Yves Perron participated in the drafting committee's work.

The three draft joint resolutions referred by the working group on political and security matters was a particular focus for the drafting committee. Senator Kutcher and Yves Perron proposed multiple amendments to the draft joint resolution on the topic of combatting transnational crimes, and many of their proposed amendments were incorporated into the final joint resolution.

As well, Senator Kutcher and Yves Perron participated in the drafting committee's discussions about the draft joint resolution on the topic of strengthening the capacity of parliaments to promote regional peace and stability. Echoing the remarks made by Senator Massicotte and Senator Oh during the deliberations of the working group on political and security matters, Senator Kutcher and Yves Perron proposed a number of amendments, including with the goal of reaching consensus.

Regarding the draft joint resolution on the topic of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, after considerable debate, members of the drafting committee decided that a

similar resolution adopted at the APPF's 30th Annual Meeting should instead be re-adopted.

The working group on economic and trade matters referred three draft joint resolutions to the drafting committee; they were on the topics of critical infrastructure, human capital development and inclusive growth, and climate action, biodiversity conservation and disaster risk reduction. Regarding the draft joint resolution on the topic of critical infrastructure, Senator Kutcher and Senator Osler repeated comments made by Senator Osler and Terry Sheehan during the working group's deliberations, reiterating that infrastructure projects specific to a country or a region should not be mentioned in the final joint resolution.

The working group on regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region referred two draft joint resolutions to the drafting committee. They focused on education and culture, and universal health care.

Finally, the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians referred two draft joint resolutions to the drafting committee. One resolution focused on women's participation and leadership, and the other concentrated on gender and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In total, the drafting committee referred 10 final draft joint resolutions to the 31st Annual Meeting's final plenary session, four of which included many clauses contained in the draft resolutions submitted by the Canadian delegation. The annual meeting concluded with the formal adoption of the 10 final joint resolutions.

Regarding the Philippine delegation's proposal to amend the APPF's Rules of Procedure to have the Meeting of Young Parliamentarians be a regular meeting of the APPF, the joint communiqué states that APPF member states agreed to consider the proposal at the 32nd Annual Meeting.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION

Upon arriving in the Philippines, members of the Canadian delegation received a briefing from the Ambassador of Canada to the Philippines. They discussed the growing bilateral relationship between Canada and the Philippines, as well as such topics as trade, education, climate change, infrastructure and agriculture. The Ambassador also noted that 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and the Philippines.

To help prepare for the APPF's 31st Annual Meeting, members met with officials from Global Affairs Canada to gain a better understanding of issues important to Canada in the Asia-Pacific region and to discuss the objectives of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. As well, Senator Kutcher met with the Ambassador of Canada to the Philippines and the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Canada. Alongside Senator Osler, Senator Kutcher met with the Ambassador of the Philippines to Canada in order to exchange views about, and priorities for, the APPF's 31st Annual Meeting.

During the annual meeting, Senator Kutcher also met with Senator Zubiri and Speaker Romualdez. They discussed a range of topics, including the importance of people-to-people relations, and peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, members of the Canadian delegation met with delegates from Australia, China, Japan, Thailand and Viet Nam. In general, these meetings provided opportunities to discuss the content of the delegations' draft resolutions and to exchange views on topics of mutual interest. Topics discussed during these meetings included: academic and student exchanges; supply chains; trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region; such global challenges as climate change and energy supplies; labour shortages; housing shortages; and cooperation through parliamentary diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

Delegates from the host parliament and other APPF member states both acknowledged and appreciated the Canadian delegation's contribution to the APPF's 31st Annual Meeting. Canadian delegates were key contributors during the working groups' deliberations, including in relation to the text of the draft joint resolutions, and succeeded in having many clauses contained in the Canadian delegation's draft resolutions included in the draft joint resolutions referred to the drafting committee. As well, Canadian delegates were instrumental in helping to achieve consensus regarding the final joint resolutions, and they participated in the discussions on various issues in the plenary sessions. Finally, during meetings with delegates from other countries, Canadian delegates exchanged views about issues of common interest, enhanced mutual understanding and strengthened bilateral relations.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Paul J. Massicotte, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-China Legislative Association

The Honourable Stan Kutcher, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Mr. Majid Jowhari, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-China Legislative Association

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada China Legislative Association and Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	31 st Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF)
DESTINATION	Manila, Philippines
DATES	From November 23 to 26, 2023
DELEGATION	
	Hon. Stan Kutcher
	Hon. Paul J. Massicotte
	Hon. Victor Oh
	Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler
	Han Dong
	Yves Perron
	Terry Sheehan
	Grant McLaughlin, Association Secretary Geneviève Gosselin, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 81,645.45
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 13,282.04
HOSPITALITY	\$ 220.90
PER DIEMS	\$ 3,784.24
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 296.25
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 23.66
TOTAL	\$ 99,252.54