



Report

**Visit of the Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P.,
Speaker of the House of Commons,
Norway**

January 9-10, 2017

The Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, conducted an official visit to Norway on January 9 and 10, 2017.

The Speaker has the honour to present his

Report

The Canadian delegation was composed of the following members:

- The Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons;
- Mr. Brian Underhill, Chief of Staff, Office of the Speaker; and
- Ms. Marlene Sandoval, Secretary to the delegation.

Context – Norway

With a population of 5.2 million people, the Kingdom of Norway is located in northern Europe, facing the Atlantic Ocean to the west and bordering Sweden to the east and Finland and Russia to the north. Norway has vast amounts of natural resources, particularly petroleum. This wealth of natural resources compared to its small population has allowed the country to obtain one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Norway is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. While the monarch officially retains executive power, his/her duties are mainly representative and ceremonial. In practice, the Council of State, headed by the Prime Minister, which is appointed by the monarch with the approval of the Storting (parliament), exercises executive power, and is accountable to the Storting.

The Storting holds the legislative power. Prior to 2009 it operated as a bicameral body, but the upper house was abolished following a 2007 amendment to the Norwegian Constitution. The 169 members of the Storting are elected by proportional representation every four years. In 1987, the Storting passed the Sámi Act, thus creating the Sameting, the Sámi Parliament, consisting of 39 elected members who also serve four-year terms, and which main mission is to deal with all matters that it deems of particular interest to the Sámi people, an indigenous minority living in Northern Norway. There are Sami people also living in Sweden, Finland and Russia.

Canada and Norway enjoy a solid bilateral relation and a tradition of close collaboration on global issues. 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. As founding members of NATO, both countries are firmly committed to the Alliance and to strong trans-Atlantic relations, and have long identified the Arctic and the North as a key domestic and international policy priority. As Arctic Ocean coastal states, they both promote Arctic cooperation, and also work together on international marine and ocean management issues. Multilaterally, Canada and Norway have co-funded global initiatives in human security, child and maternal health, arms control and disarmament (eradication of landmines and cluster munitions), war-affected children, gender equality, human rights and nuclear waste management. According to the Canada 2011 Census, 452,705 Canadians claim Norwegian ancestry.

Objectives of the visit

The main purpose of the visit to Norway was to enhance relations and cooperation between the Parliament of Canada and the Storting of Norway, and to highlight the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Norway. The visit provided opportunities to discuss topics of common interest such as the restoration and renovation of the parliamentary precincts, climate change, the Arctic, indigenous issues, and immigration, as well as to underline shared challenges and opportunities for increased bilateral collaboration.

Meetings

During his visit to Norway, the Speaker had the great honour of being granted an audience with His Majesty King Harald V of Norway.

The Speaker also met with:

- Mr. Olemic Thommessen, President of the Storting;
- Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway;
- Mrs. Vibeke Larsen, President of the Sámi Parliament;
- Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, Chair of the Arctic delegation in the Storting and Chair of the Standing Committee of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region;
- Mr. Ola Elvestuen, Chair of the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment, and Ms. Marit Arnstad, member of the Committee;
- Mr. Gunnar Gundersen and Mr. Ove Bernt Trellevik, members of the Standing Committee on Business and Industry.

Audience with His Majesty King Harald V of Norway

The Speaker attended a private audience with His Majesty King Harald V, King of Norway, in the Royal Palace in Oslo. They conversed about Canada, Norway and of the solid bilateral relation that exists between both countries. His Majesty's fondness of Canada and his understanding of Canadian issues were evident during the exchange.

Meeting with Mr. Olemic Thommessen, President of the Storting

President Thommessen welcomed the Speaker to the Storting and, following a tour of the building that included a visit to the Chamber, invited him to his office. They both noted the strong bilateral relation between Canada and Norway, and the many opportunities for further collaboration in areas such as science and innovation, education, as well as Arctic issues and climate change. They also spoke about the potential for increased bilateral trade and regarding Canada's immigration experience.

Meeting with Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

The meeting with Prime Minister Solberg covered a range of issues. The Prime Minister noted the strength of the bilateral relation and the many similarities and regular exchanges that take place between Norway and Canada. She indicated interest in learning about the Canadian approach to immigration and multiculturalism. She also

stated that the diversification of the economy beyond resource extraction and the reduction of the impact on climate change are Norwegian priorities. They are committed to attaining a significant reduction of greenhouse emissions and to reaching climate neutrality by 2030. The Speaker commented on various Canadian initiatives to address climate change, and pointed out the carbon capture, utilization and storage mission to Canada organized by the Canadian Embassy. Other areas of shared interest, such as innovation on medical technology, science and education were also highlighted, as were Norway's relations with Russia and its international development assistance programs, notably the forest conservation initiatives in Brazil and the Central African Republic.

Meeting with Mrs. Vibeke Larsen, President of the Sámi Parliament

The Speaker met Mrs. Vibeke Larsen, President of the Sámi Parliament, who was accompanied by Mr. Jon Petter Gintal, Senior Advisor. President Larsen provided an overview of the Sámi Parliament, which opened in 1989, two years after the Sámi Act was passed by the Norwegian Parliament. She explained that the Sami Parliament addresses political matters of interest to the Sámi people, and provided an overview of the main Sámi and Northern Norwegian concerns and challenges. Issues of language, culture, and self-determination were discussed, as were recent developments and initiatives in Canada, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which Mrs. Larsen pointed as of particular interest to the Sámi.

Meeting with Mr. Eirik Sivertsen, Chair of the Arctic delegation in the Storting and Chair of the Standing Committee of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, and with Mr. Ola Elvestuen, Chair of the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment, and Ms. Marit Arnstad, member of the Committee

The discussion covered several areas of shared interest and collaboration between Canada and Norway, with a focus on promoting collaboration in the development of the Arctic as well as clean growth, the achievement of emission targets and climate change. Mr. Sivertsen spoke of the rights and challenges of people living in Northern Norway, including the effects of climate change, and the need to secure the sustainable development and diversification of the Northern economy. The Speaker commented on the challenges facing Canada's North, the value of developing a framework to address clean growth and climate change, the Canadian government's plan to implement carbon pricing, and the carbon capture, utilization and storage mission to Canada organized by the Canadian Embassy in February 2017. Mr. Elvestuen pointed also to the many opportunities that are opening up in the North to develop alternative industries, such as tourism. They also talked about the role of the oil and gas sectors in both countries' economies and the need for further research and finding innovative ways to achieve lower emissions. All agreed on the importance of holding meetings with the participation of parliamentarians from countries affected by climate change, and on the significant role that Nordic countries, including Canada, can play in promoting the change to clean energy and green economies at a global level.

Meeting with Mr. Gunnar Gundersen and Mr. Ove Bernt Trellevik, members of the Standing Committee on Business and Industry

During the meeting with Mr. Gundersen and Mr. Trellevik the Speaker highlighted the strong economic relationship between Canada and Norway, and noted that Norway imports more Canadian goods than Denmark, Sweden and Finland combined. Both countries are trade nations with similar business cultures, and there exist very few trade irritants. Mr. Gundersen said that he is looking forward to the ratification and implementation of CETA, and hopes that Norway will be able to negotiate a similar trade agreement with Canada. Oil and gas and the research sectors were cited as areas where there is good potential for collaboration, as is fisheries, a sector in which a number of Norwegian companies have a Canadian presence. They also spoke of the potential effect that Brexit may have on Norway, as well as the change of administration in the United States.

Other activities

In addition to the above meetings, the Speaker attended the opening of the Storting's spring session, where he was recognized by President Thommessen, and participated in an Arctic-focussed round table discussion with Norwegian Arctic researchers and government representatives at the Fram Museum. He was guest of honour at a luncheon reception hosted by the Embassy of Canada to Norway which brought together major Norwegian investors in Canada and several members of the Canadian business community in Norway. Finally, the Speaker had the opportunity to familiarize himself with Norwegian art by visiting the National Gallery of Norway.

Acknowledgements

The Speaker would like to thank the staff at the Canadian Embassy in Oslo for their assistance prior to and during the visit. He would like to extend special thanks to Ambassador Artur Wilczynski for his support and presence during the visit.

The Speaker is also grateful to the International Department of the Storting for their support during the visit, and to Global Affairs Canada and the Library of Parliament for all the documentation provided in preparation for the visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P.,
Speaker of the House of Commons

Travel Costs

Visit of the Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, Norway

TRAVEL	\$ 10,221.78
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ACCOMMODATION	\$ 167.87
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PER DIEMS	\$ 671.70
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PROTOCOL	\$ 4,726.73
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MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00
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TOTAL	\$ 15,788.08
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