



Report

Visit of the Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, and a Parliamentary Delegation, Mexico

March 27-29, 2017

The Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, led a Parliamentary Delegation on an official visit to Mexico from March 27-29, 2017.

The delegation has the honour of presenting its

Report

The Canadian delegation was composed of the following members:

- The Honourable Geoff Regan, P.C., M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons;
- The Honourable Michelle Rempel, P.C., M.P.;
- Mr. Murray Rankin, M.P.;
- Mr. William Amos, M.P.;
- Mr. Brian Underhill, Chief of Staff, Office of the Speaker; and
- Ms. Caroline Massicotte, Secretary to the delegation.

Background

Canada and Mexico have enjoyed strong relations and diplomatic ties for more than 70 years. As strategic partners in North America, the two countries cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally in a number of areas, including trade, energy, security, labour and human rights. They participate in a number of initiatives and agreements, such as the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Canada-Mexico Partnership. Canada and Mexico are among the 12 countries that signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement on February 4, 2016.

The country has a presidential system and a bicameral Parliament, with an upper house - the Senate (Cámara de Senadores) - and a lower house - the Chamber of Deputies (Cámara de Diputados). President Enrique Peña Nieto, of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI), was elected for a non-renewable six-year term and took office on December 1, 2012. He has introduced significant structural reforms in the areas of energy, education and telecommunications.

During the mid-term elections held on June 7, 2015, President Nieto maintained his majority in the lower house by forming a coalition with the Mexican Green Ecological Party (Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico, or PVEM) and the New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza, or PNA). Although the country's economy is considered an emerging force internationally, Mexico is still plagued by serious poverty, injustice and violence caused by criminal drug cartels.

In terms of Mexico's relationship with its neighbour, the new U.S. administration's approach to security and illegal immigration, as well as its interest in renegotiating NAFTA have raised a lot of concerns and created a climate of uncertainty in Mexico.

Interparliamentary relations have traditionally been a key component of the relationship between Canada and Mexico. Members of both countries' upper and lower houses meet regularly through the Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meetings. This forum has brought parliamentarians together six times over the past 10 years, with the last meeting being held in Canada in November 2014. Given the Canadian federal election

in 2015, a meeting could not be arranged. The next Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting will take place in Mexico in the later part of this year.

Objectives

The last Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting dates back to 2014, and this 2017 visit took place in a time of relative political uncertainty. The purpose of the visit was to further strengthen the already solid connection between Canada and Mexico, renew ties between parliamentarians from the two countries and discuss common concerns, such as security, trade and the best way forward for North America. During the visit, delegates were also able to talk about a number of issues related to migration; gender equality; cooperation in education, labour and development; and, also, Mexico's political climate.

Meetings

While in Mexico, the delegation met with:

- Her Excellency Guadalupe Murguía, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies;
- His Excellency Pablo Escudero Morales, Speaker of the Senate;
- His Excellency Luis Videgaray Caso, Secretary of Foreign Affairs;
- Senator Blanca Alcala Ruiz, Deputy Speaker of the Senate; Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron, Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and Deputy Alejandra Noemi Reynoso Sánchez, Secretary of the Executive Board;
- Deputy Victor Giorgana Jiménez, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, and Fernando Uriarte Zazueta, Chair of the Mexican section of the Mexico-Canada Friendship Group.

Meeting with Her Excellency Guadalupe Murguía, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies

The Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies received the delegates in her office. Speaker Regan emphasized how important Mexico is to Canada; that the relationship extends beyond trade and is based on common fundamental values. He also mentioned that any future renegotiation of NAFTA should be done trilaterally with Mexico and the United States.

Speaker Murguía was delighted that the delegation had come to Mexico and was reaffirming its ties to the country in this time of uncertainty. She noted that as she is from a region where a number of Canadian companies have set up businesses, she understands the importance of maintaining and encouraging business relations between our countries to support job creation. Speaker Murguía suggested that it would be advantageous in the future to increase our efforts in education. The meeting concluded with both groups expressing an interest in maintaining and expanding parliamentary relations. With this in mind, a Canadian delegation will visit Mexico as part of the Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting in the later part of 2017.

Official remarks to the Senate, accompanied by His Excellency Pablo Escudero Morales, Speaker of the Senate

After welcoming the Canadian delegation, Senate Speaker Escudero Morales stated that Canada and Mexico share common values such as tolerance and respect for democratic institutions. He emphasized that Canada and Mexico are each other's third-largest trading partner, and he noted the contribution by Canadian companies such as Bombardier and Scotiabank to Mexico's economic growth. Speaker Morales then stated that NAFTA is vital to North America's increased prosperity and that we must join forces to stay globally competitive. He paid tribute to Canada for its treatment of migrants and he thanked the Canadian Government for recently removing the visa requirement for Mexican visitors to Canada. He closed by praising the countries' healthy parliamentary relations and noted the upcoming Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting.

Speaker Regan was extended the special honour of formally addressing the Senate. In his speech, he emphasized the extent of the relationship between the two countries. He noted that Mexico is more than a tourist destination; it is our friend and ally. Canada and Mexico have strong ties between their citizens, a rich cultural relationship and increasing trade and investment. To underline this important relationship, he stated that the Canadian delegation had come to build bridges with Mexico, and he relayed the message that the Canadian Government hoped to improve and expand its relationship with Mexico bilaterally and within the North American partnership. On the subject of renegotiating NAFTA, Speaker Regan reiterated Canada's position on the need for trilateral talks.

Meeting with His Excellency Luis Videgaray Caso, Secretary of Foreign Affairs

Secretary Videgaray and Speaker Regan discussed the importance of maintaining a close relationship between our two countries. It was noted that President Nieto's visit to Canada last June and visits by seven Canadian ministers over the past six months certainly reinforce this closeness. Speaker Regan stated that the relationship between our two countries is based not only on significant trade ties but also on a deep connection between citizens. He added that this relationship must be strengthened if we want to stay competitive internationally, especially in regard to Asia and Europe.

Secretary Videgaray and Speaker Regan agree that any future renegotiation of NAFTA must be trilateral and that our economies would benefit from further integration. Secretary Videgaray mentioned that his strong relationship with Minister Freeland fosters effective communication. In the current climate, parliamentary relations and multilateral agencies must be encouraged as much as possible. The question of making the parliamentary friendship group a full-fledged association was discussed. Secretary Videgaray and Speaker Regan went on to discuss the challenges facing their governments, such as immigration, border security and human rights.

Meeting with Senator Blanca Alcala Ruiz, Deputy Speaker of the Senate, Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron, Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and Deputy Alejandra Noemi Reynoso Sánchez, Secretary of the Executive Board

Following a warm welcome from Senator Cuevas, the delegates attended a meeting chaired by Blanca Alcala Ruiz, Deputy Speaker of the Senate. Also present were several senators who sit on committees that study trade and North American relations. In their opening remarks, senators Alcala and Cuevas, and Deputy Reynoso Sánchez emphasized the need for North America to work collaboratively in a number of areas, including security, employment, trade, labour, investment and the environment, in order to find ways to remain competitive.

Speaker Regan reaffirmed the Canadian government's intention to renegotiate NAFTA trilaterally. He stated that Canada and Mexico are important strategic partners that share an ongoing dialogue and a commitment that extends beyond trade and tourism. The following subjects were also raised during the meeting: the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, border security, the Paris Treaty and the importance of strong parliamentary relations. Participants expressed their concern over the future of NAFTA. They also recognized that the agreement must be renewed and they hope to enhance it in order to increase economic integration across North America.

Meeting with Deputy Victor Giorgana Jiménez, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, and Deputy Fernando Uriarte Zazueta, Chair of the Mexican section of the Mexico-Canada Friendship Group

Following a warm welcome, the delegates attended a meeting co-chaired by deputies Giorgana and Uriarte. Also in attendance were several members of committees that study trade and North American relations, as well as members of the Mexican section of the Mexico-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group. The Canadian delegates congratulated their Mexican counterparts on the 42% representation for women in their Chamber of Deputies. Participants spoke of the economic and trade relationship between Mexico and Canada, and expressed interest in a closer relationship in the future.

Our Mexican counterparts suggested we should focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. They would like to learn from our success stories, such as how we increased the number of women in the corporate sector and reduced violence against women. They also look forward to discussions on other subjects such as pluralism, liberalism, diversity, the environment, and human rights. They feel that NAFTA offers the ideal opportunity to show that outcomes are better and fairer when we work together. Speaker Regan agreed with their assertion that renegotiation must be trilateral. They are anxious to start talks and believe that the next Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting must take place as soon as possible.

Other activities

In addition to these meetings, the delegation visited TransCanada's facilities and met with representatives of Canadian companies doing business with Mexico (Air Canada,

Bombardier, Scotiabank, Torex Gold) and with a representative of Export Development Canada. The delegation also discussed economic, political, security and immigration issues with the following academic researchers and representatives from think tanks:

- Dr. Marco Antonio Fernández, Researcher, Tecnológico de Monterrey;
- Ms. Maria Celia Toro, Researcher, Colegio de México;
- Dr. Claudia Patricia Masferrer, Researcher, Colegio de México;
- Dr. Carlos Heredia, Researcher, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas;
- Mr. Nick Panes, Senior Associate, Control Risks;
- Mr. Christopher Gascon, Director, International Office for Migration;
- Ms. Luz Maria de la Mora, CEO, LMM Consulting.

These meetings were productive in that they helped delegates gain a better understanding of Mexico's political and economic climate, the impact of the upcoming federal elections, and the role Canada can play in the current environment. The delegation also visited the centre operated by the Scalabriniani Mission with Migrants and Refugees (SMR), an organization that promotes and defends the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, as well as assists and advocates for human rights workers. Representatives from this organization, which receives funding from the [Canada Fund for Local Initiatives](#), and women's rights advocates in Mexico discussed issues affecting women in Mexico, such as violence, poverty, injustice and human rights. This meeting shed light on the systemic barriers facing migrants and women, and highlighted development opportunities in Mexico.

Acknowledgements

The delegation would like to thank the staff at Global Affairs Canada, the Library of Parliament and the Canadian Embassy in Mexico for their support, professionalism and help in preparing for the visit. The delegation would also like to thank Ambassador Pierre Alarie and Chantal Chastenay, Minister-Counsellor, for their assistance and presence during 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, and a Parliamentary Delegation, Mexico

TRAVEL	\$ 15,981.36
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 8,578.85
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,252.02
PROTOCOL	\$ 1,100.44
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 297.84
TOTAL	\$ 27,210.51