



## **Report**

**Visit of the Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C.,  
Speaker of the Senate,  
and a Parliamentary Delegation,  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

**May 19-23, 2017**



The Honourable George J. Furey, QC, Speaker of the Senate, led a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to Haiti, from May 19 to 23, 2017.

The delegation is honoured to table its

## **Report**

The official delegation was made up of the following members:

- The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate;
- Mrs. Karen Furey;
- The Honourable Jim Munson, Senator;
- The Honourable Paul E. McIntyre, Q.C., Senator;
- The Honourable Françoise Mégie, Senator;
- Mr. Stuart Barnable, Chief of Staff to the Speaker;
- Mr. Mike McDonald, Director, Corporate Security Officer for the Senate; and
- Mr. Simon Larouche, Secretary to the delegation.

### **Background**

Haiti is located in the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. The country is a republic with a bicameral parliament called the National Assembly, made up of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The current President of the Republic is Jovenel Moïse, a member of the Parti haïtien Tèt Kale (PHTK). He won the presidential election on November 20, 2016, with 55.67% of the votes. He officially took office on February 7, 2017. Jack Guy Lafontant was appointed Prime Minister on February 22, 2017. After presenting his government on March 13, 2017, he won the confidence of both chambers of Haiti's National Assembly and took office on March 21, 2017.

Haiti's history has been marked by political instability, exacerbated by weak institutions and by the damage caused by two devastating natural disasters: the earthquake on January 12, 2010, and Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. Despite the fact that the President's party, the PHTK, won a slim victory after the most recent parliamentary elections, the National Assembly remains divided and can complicate the government's task in having its proposals adopted.

With a gross domestic product (GDP) estimated at \$7.7 billion (US) and a per-capita GDP of about \$818 (US) in 2016, Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Because of ineffective governance and the slow pace of reconstruction after the natural disasters in recent years, economic development is significantly lacking. The country is facing many socio-economic challenges, such as unemployment, drought, and a cholera epidemic. Domestic security in Haiti is also precarious because of social and political unrest in the countryside and the level of serious crime in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established in 2004; its mandate will end in October 2017.

Canada and Haiti share deep people-to-people ties and French as a common language. As a result, the two countries enjoy a robust relationship. The bond has become stronger over the years with the growth of the Haitian community in Canada

(approximately 150,000 people), the Government of Canada's significant involvement in Haiti, and the establishment of Canadian developmental aid organizations in Haiti. Canada has long been a major donor: Haiti is one of Canada's priority nations for humanitarian assistance and the largest beneficiary in the Americas. Investments have totalled more than \$1.6 billion since 2006, of which more than \$1 billion came as a result of the earthquake on January 12, 2010.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Strengthen ties between Canada and Haiti;
- Observe first-hand the needs of the Haitian people and the effects of Canada's development assistance;
- Encourage ongoing parliamentary dialogue and affirm the Parliament of Canada's support for Haiti's democratic institutions; and
- Promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the country.

## **Meetings**

While visiting Port-au-Prince, the delegation met with:

- His Excellency Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti;
- His Excellency Jack Guy Lafontant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti;
- His Excellency Youri Latortue, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Haiti;
- His Excellency Gérald Oriol Jr., Secretary of State for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities; and
- Mrs. Susan D. Page, the Secretary General's Deputy Special Representative for the Rule of Law, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

## **Meeting with His Excellency Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti**

President Moïse warmly welcomed the delegation to his office in the Palais national, the official residence of the President of the Republic of Haiti. He stressed the strong ties between his country and Canada and the importance of strong, effective democratic institutions for the future of his country. Speaker Furey congratulated President Moïse on his recent victory in the presidential elections. Also discussed were the major contributions of both the Haitian National Police and the Provisional Electoral Council in ensuring the success of the long electoral process.

In reply to members of the delegation, President Moïse explained his government's objectives in agriculture and his ambition to make it Haiti's economic engine. For him, one of the major challenges is to manage surface water in order to control the effects of climate change, to expand the area of fertile land devoted to agriculture, and to encourage the production of hydroelectricity. To carry out his program, the Haitian president has declared that he is ready to work with all international partners, including Quebec and the rest of Canada's provinces. He especially wants to strengthen his electricity grid and increase its capacity. Canada's ambassador to Haiti, Ms. Paula Caldwell St-Onge, stressed the excellent collaboration between the two countries and

the Canadian provinces. They discussed various cooperation projects that are underway.

Finally, President Moïse expressed his wish to visit Canada in the near future. He encouraged the Canadian parliamentary delegation to visit other regions of Haiti on a future visit.

### **Meeting with His Excellency Jack Guy Lafontant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti**

This meeting took place in the Primature haïtienne. Prime Minister Lafontant thanked the Canadian delegation for its important parliamentary mission to Port-au-Prince. He applauded the strong ties between the two countries and recognized the significance of the Haitian diaspora in Canada.

Prime Minister Lafontant detailed his government's program in agriculture, food security, education, and public health, as well as the main actions taken in the fight against corruption and crime. He highlighted Canada's critical support for the Haitian National Police. Speaker Furey spoke highly of the successes and plans of Haiti's new government.

The Prime Minister and the Canadian delegates discussed the National Assembly's approval process for the government of Haiti. The relationship between the executive and legislative branches was also addressed. Speaker Furey highlighted the technical assistance that the Parliament of Canada can provide to democratic institutions in Haiti, particularly the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program.

### **Meeting with His Excellency Youri Latortue, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Haiti**

Speaker Latortue met with the Canadian parliamentary delegation accompanied by Senator Onondieu Louis, from the Nord-Ouest Department of Haiti. The Haitian Speaker expressed his pleasure with the strength of the parliamentary exchanges between his country and Canada, and especially with the province of Quebec. He said that he would like to further strengthen them, given the common link between the two countries as a result of the French language.

Speaker Furey congratulated Speaker Latortue and his colleague Senator Louis on their recent elections as senators. Speaker Latortue spoke about his appointment as Speaker of Haiti's upper chamber in January 2017, and discussed the main legislative projects on the agenda. He also highlighted what can be done to strengthen his country's institutions. Speaker Furey encouraged his counterpart to strive towards his objectives and offered Canada's assistance in doing so. They agreed that strong, stable government institutions depend on a strong, stable public service.

Speaker Latortue explained the committee system in Haiti's National Assembly. He asked for the Parliament of Canada's assistance in improving the work of Haiti's parliamentary committees. The Parliamentary Officers' Study Program was discussed in that context. The meeting ended with Senator Louis making a short presentation on the Nord-Ouest Department and its needs.

### **Meeting with His Excellency Gérald Oriol Jr., Secretary of State for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**

Accompanied by Senator Jim Munson, Chair of the Senate Committee on Human Rights, Speaker Furey met Secretary of State Gérald Oriol Jr. They discussed the status of the rights of persons with disabilities in Haiti and its government's plans. The Secretary of State explained the major challenges of persons with disabilities, using his own personal journey in detail, since he has been living with muscular dystrophy since he was a child. Referring to the earthquake in 2010 and Hurricane Matthew in October 2016, he pointed out that those with disabilities are among the most adversely affected during natural disasters.

He introduced the story and the mandate of the State Secretariat for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The organization was established in 2007 and is made up of eight regional offices so that services can be decentralized and thus, more effectively distributed around the country. The Secretary of State indicated that, despite a very limited budget, his organization is accomplishing a significant amount of work. A great deal of progress has been made in recent years, including the passage of national legislation on persons with disabilities and the ratification of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. He also laid out his main short-term and medium-term projects and priorities.

When asked by Speaker Furey about the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the education system, the Secretary of State explained that the situation has improved in recent years. The principal issue is now to gather reliable statistics. He emphasized the collaboration between his organization and a number of civil society organizations, including the Société haïtienne des droits aux aveugles. The Canadian parliamentarians and the Haitian Secretary of State agreed that every effort expended to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a society is a major benefit for the country as a whole.

### **Meeting with Mrs. Susan D. Page, the Secretary General's Deputy Special Representative for the Rule of Law, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)**

At the MINUSTAH base, Speaker Furey and the members of the delegation visited the monument commemorating the United Nations staff killed during the earthquake in 2010. A wreath of flowers was laid in their memory.

The Canadian delegation then met Mrs. Page, who was accompanied by Mr. Giuseppe Calandruccio, chief of MINUSTAH's human rights section. The two representatives of the UN mission introduced MINUSTAH's objectives, its achievements since it began in 2004, and the main challenges it has encountered. Mrs. Page specifically addressed the problems that will arise with the announced end of the mission in October 2017 and its replacement with the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). Mr. Calandruccio talked about the issue of corruption in the country and about matters related to the operation of the justice system. He described the situation in Haitian prisons. In closing, they discussed Canada's participation in the UN mission.

### **Other meetings and activities**

During the visit, the delegation met with a number of leading Haitian figures and with Canadian partners for discussions on the main issues and challenges facing Haiti, their views of Canadian involvement in the country, and the policies needed for the future.

The delegation visited the Hôpital Bernard Mevs in Port-au-Prince, a private health care facility established in 1994. The Canadian delegates had the opportunity to visit the intensive care unit, the emergency room, and the pediatric care department. By so doing, they were able to observe first-hand the medical realities of Port-au-Prince and the Canadian contribution to health care in Haiti.

The delegation also visited the École nationale Argentine Belgarde (preschool to grade 6), in order to see the school canteen established by the World Food Program and its local partner, the Fondation pour le développement et l'encadrement de la famille haïtienne (FONDEFH). The Government of Canada has contributed to the establishment of the program through various partners, but its participation is coming to an end. The possibility of extending Canada's involvement in the cooperation program was also discussed.

Finally, the delegates attended a presentation of the Haiti Priorise project, a project led by the Copenhagen Consensus Center and funded by Canada. The goal of the initiative is to use cost-benefit analysis to identify the developmental initiatives with the most promise in terms of their impact on Haitian society. A series of theme-based roundtables has generated proposals for action to develop the country and, during the meeting, the principal results were presented to the Canadian delegates.

### **Acknowledgements**

The delegation expresses its thanks to the staff of Global Affairs Canada, the Library of Parliament, and the Embassy of Canada in Port-au-Prince for their support, their professionalism, and their assistance in preparing for this visit. It expresses special thanks to Ambassador Paula Caldwell St-Onge and Richard Le Bars, Political Counsellor at the Embassy, for their support during the visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C.  
Speaker of the Senate

## **Travel Costs**

Visit of the Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Speaker of the Senate, and a parliamentary delegation to Haiti

<b>TRAVEL</b>	<b>\$32,272.75</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$9,184.25</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$4,634.17</b>
<b>PROTOCOL</b>	<b>\$2,240.70</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$3,416.40</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$51,748.27]</b>