



Report

**Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella,
Speaker of the Senate,
and a Parliamentary Delegation,
Rome, Vatican City, Skopje, Podgorica and Belgrade**

September 2-12, 2013

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and a delegation of senators visited Rome, Vatican City, Skopje, Podgorica and Belgrade from September 2 to 12, 2013.

The delegation has the honour of tabling its

Report

The official delegation led by Speaker Noël A. Kinsella was comprised of the following members:

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Senator, Speaker of the Senate;

Mrs. Ann Kinsella;

The Honourable Percy Downe, Senator;

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator;

Ms. Janelle Feldstein, Chief of Staff of the Speaker of the Senate;

Ms. Elizabeth Rody, Chief of Protocol of Parliament;

Mr. David Gagnon, Secretary to the delegation.

ROME

Context

Western civilization owes much to Ancient Rome, especially with respect to political development and the arts. Rome was founded in 753 B.C. and was ruled by Kings until 509 B.C., when it became a republic. It developed into an empire in 45 B.C. under Julius Caesar. At one point it ruled much of the Mediterranean world (extending from present-day French and German territory to present-day Turkish territory).

Rome remains the political center of Italy. The head of state in Italy is the President who is elected to a seven-year term by an electoral college comprising both houses as well as a number of regional representatives. The office is largely ceremonial; the President can veto legislation but that veto can be overridden by a simple majority of both houses. The head of the government is the Prime Minister. Executive power rests with the Prime Minister and his or her Cabinet or Council of Ministers who are responsible to Parliament. The Prime Minister is generally the leader of the majority party or the majority coalition. Legislative power is held by Parliament, which is bicameral. The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies have identical powers, that is, both function and make decisions independently and both must adopt all legislation before it is forwarded to the President for his or her signature. The Senate is composed of 315 members elected (some directly, some by regional proportional representation) to a five-year term plus an additional 7 members appointed for life (including all former Presidents). The Chamber of Deputies is composed of 630 members elected (some directly, some by proportional representation) to a five-year term.

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Strengthen relations between Canada and Italy;
- Promote the establishment of an ongoing parliamentary dialogue and future parliamentary exchanges;
- Promote educational exchanges;
- Discuss the importance of mobility agreements;
- Promote collaboration between container shipping ports;
- Highlight the range of Canada's interests in the region;
- Discuss the importance of labour agreements; and
- Promote research sharing in the area of agriculture.

Meetings

In Rome, the delegation met with: His Excellency Pietro Grasso, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Italy; Mr. Luigi de Maio, Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Italy; and Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Meeting with His Excellency Pietro Grasso, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Italy

His Excellency Pietro Grasso welcomed the delegation and stated that his wish was for stronger parliamentary cooperation between the Italian and Canadian Senate. He praised Canada for its work on organized crime that once allowed him to resolve a case when he was an anti mafia prosecutor. Speaker Kinsella discussed the importance of establishing ties between national legislatures. He spoke positively of the relations between Canada and Italy and indicated that he placed high value on parliamentary diplomacy. He mentioned that the G20 Speakers' Consultations have allowed frank discussions between parliamentarians on a variety of subjects and added that he was looking forward to the next meeting in St Petersburg.

Speaker Grasso and Speaker Kinsella expressed enthusiasm for future economic cooperation between the two nations. They agreed that the signing of a free trade agreement would be beneficial for both economies, bringing the relationship to a new plateau. Speaker Kinsella suggested that Italy take full advantage of the Atlantic Gateway for better access to the North American market. The two participants shared the view that enhancing youth mobility would also be beneficial to their economies.

At the end of the meeting, Speaker Kinsella presented a letter of invitation for a representative of the administration of the Senate of Italy to participate in the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program hosted by the Parliament of Canada.

Meeting with Mr. Luigi de Maio, Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Italy

Both Speakers mentioned the benefits of parliamentary exchanges and the need to increase the links between their respective chambers. They discussed international student exchanges and agreed on the importance of such exchanges in today's globalized world. Speaker Kinsella stated that today's youth can expect to change careers and work, on average, in three different countries. Eradicating mobility barriers is an important goal that must be addressed.

Speaker Kinsella indicated that the development of the oil industry in Canada represents an economic opportunity for Italy. Bringing crude oil from Halifax to Italy at a competitive price and in a short amount of time will soon become a reality. The Deputy Speaker mentioned that Italy wishes to attract foreign investments. He also indicated that Italian companies have been successful in Canada. Speaker Kinsella added that the many Italians that came to Canada have also contributed to the country's history.

Both presiding officers discussed opportunities for future cooperation between their respective countries. With the objective of fostering closer relations, Speaker Kinsella presented a letter of invitation for a representative of the administration of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy to participate in the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program hosted by the Parliament of Canada.

Meeting with Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Mr. Cassini indicated that this visit is a testimony to the friendship between Canada and Italy. He expressed his concerns over the austerity measures adopted by the European countries after the economic downturn. He is of the opinion that the cuts have hindered the level of employment and that Italy needs a new economic policy centered on economic growth. Mr. Cassini also mentioned the need to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict.

Speaker Kinsella noted some of the challenges experienced during the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting in Quebec City in 2012 and that there was a need to modernize the operations of the organization. He added that Canada might withdraw from the organization, as a debate over its effectiveness is taking place. Senator Ataullahjan, Chair of the Canadian Branch of the IPU, praised the work the organization has done over the years, a view shared by Speaker Kinsella. Mr. Cassini, who is also the Honorary President of the IPU, proposed to write a letter requesting that Canada remain a participant in the IPU.

Mr. Cassini and Speaker Kinsella discussed ways to improve the economic relationship between Italy and Canada. Increased youth mobility was favoured as a way to better respond to the economic needs of the two countries.

VATICAN CITY

Context

The Vatican City State is a territory consisting mainly of a 0.5 square km independent enclave in the city of Rome. The Pope governs the Holy See with the support of the Roman Curia, composed of 25 cabinet-level departments (the Secretariat of State, nine Congregations, three Tribunals and twelve Pontifical Councils), each typically headed by a Cardinal and staffed by professional bureaucrats and diplomats who reflect the multinational character of the Church.

The Secretariat of State, in coordination with the rest of the Roman Curia, is responsible for the Holy See's internal affairs as the central authority of the Catholic Church (First Section) and external relations with states and the international community (Second Section).

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Engage in dialogue, advocacy and cooperation on a broad range of issues of importance to Canada;
- Promote inter-faith dialogue and human rights; and
- Enhance relations

Meetings

In Vatican City, the delegation met with: Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States; His Eminence Marc Cardinal Ouellet, Prefect, Congregation for Bishops and President, Pontifical Commission for Latin America; and Monsignor Enrico dal Covolo, Rector of the Lateran University.

Meeting with Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States

Speaker Kinsella and Archbishop Mamberti discussed the recent establishment of the Canada-Holy See Friendship Group. Both agreed that the group is a testimony to the strong links that have developed over the last years. Speaker Kinsella explained the great benefits of parliamentary diplomacy which is conducted at both the bilateral and multinational level. He stated that he would like to see an increase in academic exchanges with the Lateran University. He also announced that the Government of Canada has recently created an Office of Religious Freedom. Its Ambassador, Mr. Andrew Bennett, has been active in promoting religious tolerance.

Concerned about the Syrian situation and its possible escalation to neighbouring countries, the participants discussed ways to resolve the conflict peacefully. They shared the view that permanent inter-faith dialogue would be needed to preserve and protect the religious communities that are part of the region's history. As such, Archbishop Mamberti was pleased to hear of the recent creation of the Office of Religious Freedom in that it recognizes the importance of religion in one's life.

It was agreed that the United Nations plays an essential role in allowing dialogue between representatives of all recognized nations and that the Security Council needs reforms that would allow it to enforce international law. The Speaker indicated that the Inter-Parliamentary Union is also a focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue.

Meeting with His Eminence Marc Cardinal Ouellet, Prefect, Congregation for Bishops and President, Pontifical Commission for Latin America

After explaining the advantages and benefits of parliamentary diplomacy, Speaker Kinsella announced that the Parliament of Canada has created a Friendship Group with the Holy See that will help reinforce links. He mentioned he would like to create an academic exchange program with the Lateran University. The Speaker also spoke of the appointment of Andrew Bennett as Canada's first Ambassador of the Office of Religious Freedom. He commented on the importance of promoting tolerance so that religious minorities around the world can express their faith without fear of repression.

His Eminence Cardinal Ouellet and Speaker Kinsella discussed the Syrian conflict. Both agreed on the importance of finding a peaceful solution. His Eminence added that the Pope had called all Catholics to pray and fast for peace in Syria. In reply to a question from His Eminence, the Chargé d'Affaires to the Holy See, Mr. Jon Allen, explained that the Government of Canada fears the conflict will spread to neighbouring countries. He added that the government is providing help for refugees and that it is not in favour of a military intervention at this time.

Meeting with Monsignor Enrico dal Covolo, Rector of the Lateran University

Speaker Kinsella expressed the hope that the number of student exchanges between Canada and the Holy See could be increased. He explained the advantages of this both for the students and for their country of origin. In his view, the expertise of the Lateran University in the field of canon law and international law could be beneficial to Canadian students and the Lateran University could partner with a similar university (for instance St Paul) to also offer their students a chance to study abroad. The Speaker indicated that the Canada-Holy See Friendship Group could help inaugurate such a program. Monsignor Covolo agreed with Speaker Kinsella on the need to increase student exchanges between Canada and the Holy See. At the moment, half of the students of Lateran University come from abroad. After the meeting, the delegation was offered a tour of the university's main facilities.

SKOPJE

Context

Skopje is the home of the unicameral Assembly (Sobranie) which has 123 members elected for four-year terms through proportional representation. Parties must secure at least 5% of the vote to be represented in Parliament. Laws are adopted by a majority vote of the members attending, which may not be less than one third of the total number of MPs. In response to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Constitution was amended and requires that legislation relating to the rights of communities and local self-government require the approval of the majority of deputies representing minority communities, as well as a majority in parliament.

The executive branch includes the President, who is elected for a five-year term and is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The President has few formal powers and can delay but not veto legislation. The Prime Minister, who is the leader of the government and is formally appointed by the President from the party or parties with a majority in the Assembly, is also a member of the Executive. All governments since independence have been coalitions comprised of parties representing both Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Strengthen relations between Canada and Macedonia;
- Highlight the range of Canada's interests in the region;
- Strengthen economic ties;
- Discuss foreign policies with respect to issues of international and mutual interest;
- Promote inter-faith dialogue;
- Discuss the importance of human rights;
- Promote educational exchanges;
- Highlight the importance of parliamentary diplomacy;
- Discuss defence cooperation;
- Discuss the importance of mobility agreements; and
- Promote research in the area of agriculture.

Meetings

While in Skopje, the delegation met with: His Excellency Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia; His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia; Mr. Igor Ivanovski, Chairman of the Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with the Parliament of Canada; Major General Goranco Koteski, Head of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia; Mrs. Valentina Bozinovska, President of the Commission for Relations with the Religious Communities and Groups, and the leaders of the religious groups in Macedonia; Chris Pavlovski, CEO of Cosmic Development; and Ms. Maya Petruseva, President of the Education Academic Centre.

The delegation travelled to Tetovo where they met with: Mrs. Teuta Arifi, Mayor of Tetovo.

The delegation then travelled to Ohrid where they met with: His Excellency Gjorge Ivanov; President of the Republic of Macedonia; and Prof. Velimir Stojkovski, Rector of the St. Cyril and Methodius University.

Meeting with His Excellency Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia

The Prime Minister stated that Macedonia is an open economy that is looking for foreign investments. He called for further economic cooperation with Canada and hoped that an agreement on the promotion and protection of foreign investments will be concluded soon. He thanked Canada for its support of Macedonia's bid to join the EU and NATO and expressed his appreciation for the use of the country's official name in our bilateral relations. The Prime Minister hoped for a resolution of the name issue with Greece, noting that the two countries nevertheless have strong economic ties as reflected by the numbers of both Greek investors and tourists coming to Macedonia. The Prime Minister also welcomed the creation of a friendship group and expressed a desire for a liberalisation of the visa regime.

Speaker Kinsella conveyed Prime Minister Harper's greetings and commented on the success and contributions of the many Macedonians who have thrived in Canada. He stated that Canada is a country with a small population which has one of the oldest parliamentary democracies in the world. Like Macedonia, Canada enjoys cultural and religious diversity. The Speaker remarked that Canada continues to support Macedonia's full accession to NATO, as well as to the European Union. He mentioned the country is in the final stages of signing a trade agreement with the EU that he hoped will be applicable to Macedonia in the near future. After noting that today's youth can expect to work in three different countries during their career, the Speaker indicated the need to enhance youth mobility. Efforts should be made to allow better access to job markets and to offer more educational opportunities. The Speaker hoped that the opening of a Visa Application Center in Skopje will help facilitate the application process.

Meeting with His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski welcomed the delegation warmly and expressed his pleasure at hosting the Canadian delegation, a country he enjoyed visiting few years ago. He thanked Canada for using his country's constitutional name for bilateral purposes and for its military assistance in NATO missions. He said Macedonia aspires to join the European Union and that the country wants to attract more foreign investments.

Speaker Kinsella indicated that the delegation was honoured to visit Macedonia and that there is much to gain from parliamentary diplomacy. He mentioned that Canada is grateful to the immigrants from Macedonia who helped to build the country. He added

that working together in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan had been beneficial for the relationship between Canada and Macedonia. He then spoke about Syria where a peace paradigm based on freedom of religion and conscience would be useful to resolve the current conflict.

The Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament agreed with Speaker Kinsella on the important role played by parliamentary diplomacy. He noted that parliamentarians can sometimes open doors that are otherwise closed to governments. He mentioned he had the opportunity to witness the strong links that unite Canada and Macedonia when he visited Canada and that he was pleased that a Canada-Macedonia Friendship Group was created. On Syria, he stressed the importance of finding a peaceful solution in a timely manner to avoid further deterioration of the situation.

Speaker Kinsella proposed that the two parliamentary friendship groups look at ways to facilitate youth mobility. He stated that studies show that today's youth will change careers and work on average in three different countries. As such, mobility of people and labour must be globalized and barriers need to be removed. He added that investment barriers should also be lifted to allow businesses to be more competitive. Canada's Atlantic Gateway, its advantages, and upcoming developments in shipping were also discussed.

Finally, Speaker Kinsella spoke about the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program organized by the Parliament of Canada, and delivered a letter of invitation.

Meeting with Mr. Igor Ivanovski, Chairman of the Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with the Parliament of Canada

Mr. Igor Ivanovski, who was also accompanied by other parliamentarians belonging to the group, made reference to the Address to Parliament delivered by the Speaker prior to the meeting and reiterated the Speaker's view that parliamentary diplomacy can help nurture good relations. He thanked Canada for its support with respect to NATO and said that the creation of a cooperation group in Canada would help further the relationship between the two countries. He identified the fields of education, tourism and trade as opportunities that could be explored.

Speaker Kinsella suggested identifying concrete projects for the two cooperation groups. He proposed that they seek ways to facilitate student exchanges between universities. With the low birthrate in Canada, he indicated that Canadian universities need more foreign students to continue to thrive.

The members of the cooperation group talked about the importance of cooperating with the Macedonian Diaspora. Senator Downe noted that people of Macedonian origin have contributed to Canadian history, a view shared by Senator Ataullahjan, who added that the Ambassador of Macedonia to Canada does tremendous work representing the country's interests.

Meeting with Major General Goranko Koteski, Head of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia

Major General Koteski thanked Canada for supporting Macedonia's accession to NATO and for providing military training assistance. He explained that the Army of Macedonia comprises approximately eight thousand people and that it is modernizing to comply with NATO standards. In response to the Speaker's question, he indicated that most of the resources were geared towards land forces, as Macedonia is a landlocked country.

Speaker Kinsella explained that both houses of the Parliament of Canada have standing committees dedicated to defence issues and that they have reported on Macedonia's contribution to peacekeeping missions. The Major General indicated that very good cooperation exists between Macedonia and NATO countries. He pointed to the success of a peacekeeping mission with the United States in 2010. The mission, which contained a training aspect, could be replicated with Canada, suggested the Major General.

Meeting with Mrs. Valentina Bozinovska, President of the Commission for Relations with the Religious Communities and Groups, and the leaders of the religious groups in Macedonia

Representatives of the main religions in Macedonia were in attendance at this meeting. The discussion began with Mrs. Bozinovska stating that the country is committed to religious rights, a fact recognized by the Council of Europe. She mentioned that since independence Macedonia has made efforts to integrate religious communities and that this process was done apart from the state.

Speaker Kinsella stated that Canada is also a multicultural and multi-confessional society and that it has benefited from the wisdom of people of Macedonian origins who came to Canada. He expressed the view that public officials should be free to express their beliefs if they so wished. He congratulated Macedonia for moving forward by creating this organization which he sees as a model for reconciliation based on a fundamental human rights principle, that of freedom of religion and conscience. He said the organization's principles would be useful to prevent the kind of atrocities Syria is experiencing.

The representatives of the main religious communities briefed the Speaker on their experiences. The person representing the Macedonian Church explained that his community had been very active in Canada, noting that many churches were built after the Second World War, especially in Mississauga. He thanked Canada for its religious tolerance. The Speaker informed him about the recently created Canadian Office of Religious Freedom which will serve the same purpose abroad.

Canadian openness to different faiths was also mentioned by the leader of the Islamic community. He said he regularly receives positive comments from Muslims living in Canada.

The leader of the Roman Catholic Church noted that diversity also exists within the church. He stated that the 10th anniversary of Mother Theresa's beatification would be celebrated the next day, and that she had been born in the centre of Skopje. He noted the Church's concern with the Syrian situation.

A representative of the Jewish community explained that Jewish people have been living in Macedonia for a long time. The small community is well integrated into Macedonia's society and has built various cultural institutions including the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia.

The representative of the Methodist Church said he was proud to live in a country where his church is well treated and respected by the State.

Meeting with Chris Pavlovski, CEO of Cosmic Development

At this meeting, Speaker Kinsella proposed to take full advantage of the Youth Travel Initiative. He also pointed out the advantages of an agreement on avoidance of double taxation for companies like Cosmic Development that have offices in more than one country.

Cosmic Development is a medium size company employing about 60 people. It was founded by two young entrepreneurs from Toronto. The delegation was offered a tour of the offices at the end of the meeting. Differences between Canada and Macedonia as a place to invest were highlighted.

Meeting with Ms. Maya Petruseva, President of the Education Academic Centre

Speaker Kinsella spoke of the interest in increasing the number of student exchanges between Canada and Macedonia. He explained the advantages both for the students and for their country of origin. He expressed his concerns over the small number of Canadian students who take part in exchange programs.

Ms. Petruseva explained that one of the main goals of the Education Academic Centre is to inform the Macedonian public about educational possibilities abroad. The Centre also provides preparation courses to students for standardized academic tests such as TOEFL. Each year, the Centre organizes an annual fair where thousands of people gather to learn about available foreign educational opportunities.

The discussion turned to some of the causes that prevent more student exchanges. Speaker Kinsella pointed out the advantages of having agreements that allow students to pay their regular tuition fees while studying abroad. He added that more exchange programs should exist with technical schools. Ms. Petruseva spoke of the language barriers, noting that the number of programs offering courses in English in Macedonia was low. She said that strict visa processes can deter students from applying. The Ambassador of Canada to Macedonia explained that the new Visa Application Center would help resolve that problem.

Meeting with Mrs. Teuta Arifi, Mayor of Tetovo

The meeting commenced with Mayor Teuta Arifi explaining that her municipality, the second largest in Macedonia, is multi-ethnic. She stated that she started her political career at the national level before becoming mayor and that the city has good potential for collaboration with Canada.

Speaker Kinsella spoke of his interest in parliamentary diplomacy. He added that this kind of diplomacy differs from the diplomacy at the executive level. Parliamentary diplomacy's goal is to meet and share ideas while not having the same restraints that exist at the executive level. Such a forum allows participants to speak more freely.

The discussion turned to the importance of building high-quality public infrastructure to support future prosperity. The Mayor indicated that the Government of Macedonia passed legislation providing municipalities with better control of infrastructure projects. She mentioned that Tetovo needs to invest more in water and waste management systems.

Mayor Arifi indicated that education is a shared area of jurisdiction in Macedonia. The cities are in charge of managing primary and secondary schools, while the state pays teachers' salaries. This prompted a discussion of the different curriculums adopted by schools which take into account cultural and regional differences. Speaker Kinsella asked if this cultural sensitivity was applicable to religion. The Mayor indicated that courses on religion were offered and that most students chose a course called "Ethics of Religions".

At the Speaker's request, the Mayor provided an economic overview of her city. Home of a population in which Albanians form a relative majority, the city has two universities and has a good economic potential, though unemployment is high. Speaker Kinsella spoke of the economic advantages of signing free trade agreements and hoped for an increase in the level of bilateral trade between Canada and Macedonia.

Meeting with His Excellency Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia

His Excellency Gjorge Ivanov expressed his appreciation that Canada and Macedonia continue to cooperate well, especially in the field of education. He noted the many similarities between the two countries, including the fact that they both respect cultural and religious diversity. Having been the home of many empires, Macedonia has nurtured multiculturalism for centuries and has kept alive many traditions. This model of co-existence is used by the country to resolve issues with neighbours, Greece being an example.

Speaker Kinsella indicated that Canada has great affection for the stories of Macedonia. He said that preserving the achievements of the past is important for the entire world. He went on to describe the Canadian political system, a young democracy based on the Westminster model that has proven effective at adapting to change. He mentioned that Canada had realized the need to promote and protect multiculturalism in the 80s and

that laws were adopted to progressively give reinforcement to the preservation of diversity.

Speaker Kinsella thanked the President for attending his lecture on human rights at Saints Cyril and Methodius University, a great sign of respect. He mentioned that he saw positive energy in the eyes of the students and expressed his confidence in the future of Macedonia.

The Speaker suggested that the current visa regime should be modified to facilitate freedom of movement, especially for youth. He announced that a new Visa Application Center will open soon in Skopje and hoped it will speed up the visa process.

The Ambassador of Canada to Macedonia raised Canadian journalist stakeholder concerns about the Kezorovski case (a Macedonian journalist in pre-trial detention); the President responded that the executive could not interfere in the actions of the judiciary.

Meeting with Prof. Velimir Stojkovski, Rector of the Saint Cyril and Methodius University

At this meeting, Prof Velimir Stojkovski and Speaker Kinsella explored ways to increase the number of education agreements between Canada and Macedonia. As both countries offer extensive training in forestry and agriculture, better collaboration in these fields should be prioritized. Speaker Kinsella added the mining sector as another area of potential collaboration. Senator Downe suggested seeking cooperation in aquaculture with Eastern universities given their experience in this field.

The Saint Cyril and Methodius University has about 50,000 students, of which a thousand come from abroad. The University has accepted the Bologna process and offers five joint degree programs in collaboration with foreign universities.

Others

While in Skopje, the Speaker of the Senate delivered an address to Parliament and participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at a monument for fallen heroes of Macedonia. The delegation also met with Mrs. Biljana Markovic, Head of the Skopje Branch of Macedonia 2025, and members of Macedonia 2025. While in Ohrid, the Speaker gave a lecture at St. Paul the Apostle University. The delegation also gained a greater appreciation of the culture of the country by briefly visiting various religious, cultural and historical sites.

PODGORICA

Context

Podgorica is the capital city of Montenegro. Located on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, the Republic of Montenegro is a small mountainous country bordered by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia to the west and northwest, Serbia to the north, Kosovo (a former province of Serbia, which declared independence in February 2008) to the east, and Albania to the southeast. Its population of about 650,000 is approximately 43% Montenegrin and 32% Serbian, along with Bosniak, Albanian, Muslim, Croatian and

Roma. The country's official language is Montenegrin, but the Serbian language, as well as Bosnian, Albanian and Croatian, still have official use.

Montenegro is a democratic republic. Its legislature is the National Assembly (the Skupstina), which is a unicameral body with 81 seats. The head of state is the president, who is elected by direct vote for a five year term and is eligible for a second term. The Prime Minister, who must be proposed by the president and accepted by parliament, is head of the government and is responsible to the legislature. Members of the Skupstina are elected by direct vote for four-year terms. The last parliamentary election was held in October 2012, and the DPS-led coalition won 39 of 81 seats. After the election, the coalition welcomed parliamentarians from the Albanian and Croatian communities, giving them a total of 45 seats.

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Enhance relations between Canada and Montenegro;
- Highlight the range of Canada's interests in the region;
- Strengthen economic ties;
- Promote educational exchanges;
- Promote maritime trade and collaboration;
- Discuss the importance of labour agreements;
- Promote research sharing in the area of agriculture; and
- Discuss the importance of mobility agreements.

Meetings

While in Podgorica, the delegation met with: His Excellency Filip Vujanovic, President of Montenegro; His Excellency Milo Djukanovic, Prime Minister of Montenegro; and His Excellency Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of Montenegro.

The delegation travelled to Tivat, where they met with Mr. Krsto Bošković, Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Tivat.

The delegation then travelled to Bar, where they met with officials from the Navy of Montenegro.

Meeting with His Excellency Filip Vujanovic, President of Montenegro

The President communicated his desire to see Montenegro soon join the EU and NATO. He stated that Montenegro is committed to complying with EU criteria for new members and explained that the strategic position of the country would be an advantage for NATO. The President expressed hope that this visit would further strengthen the economic ties between the two countries. The President indicated he was very impressed by the Porto Montenegro project led by Canadian investor Peter Munk.

Speaker Kinsella indicated that EU enlargement was of great interest to Canada which is negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU. If signed, the agreement would propel the relationship to a new plateau. He expressed the desire that Montenegro join both the EU and NATO. He went on to suggest that economic cooperation with Canada could increase if a shipyard were to be transformed into a place for repairing yachts. He added that more partnerships between universities and technical schools were needed for youth to progress in a global society.

The President agreed with Speaker Kinsella on the need to further economic and educational opportunities. He added that legal protection for both countries' investors, for instance an agreement on avoidance of double taxation, should be put in place.

Meeting with His Excellency Milo Djukanovic, Prime Minister of Montenegro

His Excellency Milo Djukanovic welcomed the delegation warmly, noting that this was the first high-level Canadian visit since Montenegro's independence. He thanked Canada for its support for Montenegro's bid to join the EU and NATO. He expressed his satisfaction on both defence and economic cooperation with Canada. On the latter, he said that the Porto Montenegro project initiated by Canadian investor Peter Munk had been a success for all and that further Canadian investments would be welcomed. The Prime Minister also pointed out that the two countries work together in fighting terrorism and money laundering. The Prime Minister presented an overview of his country's history and explained that Montenegro managed to avoid conflicts after the breakup of Yugoslavia and preserved its multi-ethnic aspect. This stability helped the country to restore its independence. The country now wants to reinforce the rule of law, to implement strategies for using resources in a sustainable manner and to encourage economic growth.

After introducing the members of the Canadian delegation, Speaker Kinsella spoke about parliamentary diplomacy, a form of diplomacy which allows parliamentarians to meet and share ideas while not having the same constraints that exist at the executive level. He indicated he was impressed by the level of democracy of the whole region given its turbulent past. Multiculturalism is a key component of Canadian culture and Canada is grateful to the Montenegrins who decided to emigrate to Canada. Further economic cooperation and educational opportunities would be helpful; fewer barriers to investments and labour mobility would assist in achieving those goals. He went on to stress the importance of being creative, providing as an example the HEC Hotel Residence in Miločer which has decided to partner with the Algonquin College to offer high class education and practical training programs in tourism and hospitality.

The participants agreed that closer economic and educational ties would be beneficial for both countries.

Meeting with His Excellency Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of Montenegro

His Excellency Ranko Krivokapic informed the delegation that he had met Speaker Kinsella a few times previously. He stated that his country is pleased that Canada supports the accession of Montenegro to the EU and NATO.

The discussion turned to the importance of building and maintaining a thriving democracy. The President of the Parliament of Montenegro indicated that fair elections were key elements of democracy. Speaker Kinsella added that election monitoring missions were helpful in encouraging the development of democracy.

Also mentioned was the importance of the work carried out by parliamentary associations of both parliaments for enhancing interparliamentary cooperation. The President of the Parliament of Montenegro noted that forums such as the IPU can allow frank discussions on issues of concern. Asked about the level of collaboration at the parliamentary association of NATO, he stated that his parliament was grateful for Canada's support for Montenegro's bid to join NATO.

Meeting with Mr. Krsto Bošković, Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Tivat

It was explained that Tivat has focused its efforts on job creation since the economic crisis and has invested in municipal infrastructure like water systems in order to improve the economy and attract more investors. The Deputy Mayor pointed out that the number of tourists coming to Tivat is on the rise and that a project to expand the airport is being discussed.

Meeting with the Navy of Montenegro

The meeting occurred on a Navy ship where a presentation was given on the Navy of Montenegro. The Navy can provide assistance for ecological purposes and does search and rescue missions. It has a few assets that can be used for NATO missions and its patrol boats are for both combat and non combat tasks like maritime traffic control. The level of defence cooperation with Canada was also discussed, noting that the Navy of Montenegro has so far mainly benefited from language training.

Others

While in Tivat, the delegation met with Porto Montenegro officials. The delegation also went to Miločer and was able to observe, applied in action, Canadian vocational training techniques at the Hotel Education Centre.

BELGRADE

Context

The city of Belgrade has a population of over 1.6 million people and is the capital city of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia is a landlocked country situated in the central Balkan Peninsula in south-eastern Europe. Serbia shares a western border with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia; a northern border with Hungary; an eastern border with Romania and Bulgaria; and a southern border with the Republic of

Macedonia. The country also shares a southern border with the Republic of Kosovo, a former autonomous Serbian province which declared its independence in February 2008. Serbia includes the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which is in the northern portion of the country.

Under the terms of the November 2006 Constitution, legislative power is vested in the unicameral 250-member National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Members are elected based on a system of party-list proportional representation for a term of four years. The President of the Republic is directly elected for a term of five years, and is responsible for nominating the Prime Minister for approval by the National Assembly. The next parliamentary election is due by May 2016 and the next presidential election by May 2017.

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Strengthen relations between Canada and Serbia;
- Promote the establishment of ongoing parliamentary dialogue and future parliamentary exchanges;
- Strengthen economic ties;
- Discuss foreign policies with respect to issues of international and mutual interest;
- Promote inter-faith dialogue;
- Promote educational exchanges;
- Highlight the range of Canada's interests in the region;
- Discuss the importance of mobility agreements; and
- Promote research sharing in the area of agriculture.

Meetings

While in Belgrade, the delegation met with: His Excellency Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia; His Excellency Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia; His Excellency Dr. Nebojša Stefanović, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia; Mr. Sasa Radulovic, Minister of Finance; Mr. Zoran Bojanić, President of the Serbia-Canada Friendship Group; Mr. Miloš Aligrudić, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and Dr. Aleksandra Tomić, Chairman of the Committee on Economy, Regional Development, Trade, Tourism and Energy.

The delegation travelled to Novi Sad where they met with: Mr. Bojan Pajtić, President of the Government of Vojvodina; Mr. István Pásztor, Speaker of the Assembly of Vojvodina; Representatives of religious minorities in Vojvodina; and Prof. Dr. Miroslav Vesković, Rector of the University of Novi Sad.

Meeting with His Excellency Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

Speaker Kinsella mentioned the historical complexity of this part of Europe as being important to the world. He said Canada, as a multicultural society, shares the importance of preserving the many traditions of the world.

Speaker Kinsella indicated that economies are interconnected and therefore free flow of human capital needs to be enhanced, in particular for youth. He outlined some solutions to this problem, including creating better links with technical colleges and universities.

The President of Serbia stated that he had been Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia for seven years. He indicated that many Serbs have chosen to move to Canada hoping to find a better life. Serbia's population is aging, he noted, and the country tries to create conditions that would attract those who have left to return.

The President noted that Canada is, like Serbia, a multicultural and multi-confessional society. He explained that Serbia has suffered from the breakup of Yugoslavia and that it now wants to join the European Union at the first opportunity. Asked by the Speaker to provide an update on the negotiations, the President expressed confidence that Serbia will soon be able to join the EU, as relations with neighbouring countries are stable, although there remain some challenges with Kosovo. Speaker Kinsella replied that Canada wished to demonstrate with this visit its support for Serbia becoming a member of the EU. He added that enhancing our economic links was important and invited the President to consider a visit to Canada.

Meeting with His Excellency Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

The Prime Minister of Serbia thanked Canada for technical assistance provided in the area of health. He noted that the level of bilateral trade between Canada and Serbia is low compared to its potential. He remarked that Canada has many people of Serbian origin. His country's three top priorities are joining the European Union, normalising relations with Kosovo and encouraging economic growth. In addition, the country wants to build modern infrastructure (roads, bridges and airports) to become more competitive. Serbia would also like a liberalisation of the visa regime for its citizens travelling to Canada.

Speaker Kinsella conveyed greetings from Prime Minister Harper. To further economic links, he proposed that Canada and Serbia take full advantage of their geographical position to become the bridge between the biggest consumer market of the West (United States) and of the East (Russia). This would imply that both Canada and Serbia become transiting shipping zones. Under this model, US imports would first be shipped to Atlantic Canada where the extensive railway system would allow fast and efficient shipment anywhere in the US. Speaker Kinsella also proposed that universities specializing in the IT sector offer exchange programs to Canadian and Serbian students. The Speaker stressed the importance of acquiring a global academic experience in today's world.

Also discussed was the need to combat money laundering and corruption, a challenge when some international organizations possess more capital than some states.

Meeting with His Excellency Dr. Nebojša Stefanović, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

Speaker Kinsella thanked His Excellency Dr. Nebojša Stefanović for hosting the visit of the delegation and recalled the meeting they had together during the IPU Conference in Quebec City in 2012. Speaker Stefanović replied that it had been an honour and that the visit is a testimony to the growing links uniting the two countries. He described Serbia's priorities which include joining the European Union, building a stronger economy and improving regional cooperation.

Speaker Kinsella spoke of the advantages of parliamentary diplomacy which affords an opportunity to find creative solutions to mutual problems and challenges. He indicated that globalization requires a free flow of capital. Canadian investments which are on the rise need to be further increased. The two countries should work on the adoption of an agreement on foreign investment protection, as well as an air transportation agreement. He added that more programs offering opportunities to study abroad are needed for future generations. Finally, the Speaker noted that Canada is negotiating a free trade agreement with the European Union, a deal which could one day include Serbia if it joins the EU.

In the hopes of furthering parliamentary cooperation, joint committee meetings of the two Chambers were proposed by Speaker Kinsella. He recommended that committees meet to share best practices on multiculturalism, while the Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia suggested holding meetings on gender and equality.

At the end of the meeting, Speaker Kinsella spoke of the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program organized by the Parliament of Canada, and delivered a letter of invitation.

Meeting with Canadian Business and with Mr. Sasa Radulovic, Minister of Finance of Serbia

Speaker Kinsella expressed the hope that bilateral trade between Canada and Serbia would increase, helping to bring the relationship to a new plateau. He said that it is in Canada's national interest to create favourable economic and political conditions for Canadian investors. The two countries are on the right track and Speaker Kinsella noted that a treaty on double taxation avoidance had just been concluded. In order for the two countries to become more competitive, he stressed the importance of favouring mobility of human capital, especially for younger people.

Mr. Sasa Radulovic, Minister of Finance, joined the participants and described the economic challenges that Serbia faces. He communicated his plan to attract foreign investors that will bring well-paid jobs. He also talked about the need to support the unemployed, to amend labour laws and to attack corruption. The Minister urged companies around the table to create a mechanism that could provide him with constant advice and feedback on laws, regulations and the business environment in general.

Speaker Kinsella suggested that the companies form a Serbian-Canadian Business Council.

Meeting with Mr. Zoran Bojanić, President of the Serbia-Canada Friendship Group

Mr. Zoran Bojanić and Speaker Kinsella expressed the need for the creation of a Canada-Serbia Friendship Group to move the relationship to a new plateau. The President of the Serbia-Canada Friendship Group indicated that good cooperation with Canada has existed for a long time as many Serbs have emigrated to Canada. Speaker Kinsella expressed appreciation of the contributions made by the Serbs who have thrived in the Canadian mosaic. Also discussed were the many economic opportunities awaiting both countries when more investment and labour barriers are eliminated.

Meeting with Mr. Miloš Aligrudić, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Mr. Miloš Aligrudić hoped that the high-level meetings will lead to the furthering of the political and economic aspects of the relationship between Serbia and Canada. Even if bilateral trade is increasing, the Chairman called for more Canadian investments. Canadian companies that have invested in Serbia have earned a good reputation. He advised that the main goal of Serbia's foreign policy is to join the European Union; an objective supported by Canada. He requested a change to the current visa regime that Serbs see as being too restrictive.

Speaker Kinsella shared his view on visas, noting that they create barriers that are hard to justify in this world economy. He hoped that the Visa Application Center that opened recently in Belgrade will ease the visa process for Serbs coming to Canada. On the trade relationship, he pointed out the potential benefit of Serbia joining the European Union, as Canada is currently negotiating a trade agreement with Brussels. The Speaker also proposed that the two countries work together to offer more student exchange opportunities.

Toward the end of the meeting, a North American map was presented by the Speaker to the members of the committee to show the cost effectiveness of shipping goods to Canada compared to the United States.

Meeting with Dr. Aleksandra Tomić, Chairman of the Committee on Economy, Regional Development, Trade, Tourism and Energy

Dr. Aleksandra Tomić welcomed the delegation and hoped that the visit of Speaker Kinsella will help improve the level of exchanges between Canada and Serbia.

Speaker Kinsella mentioned that parliamentarians play an important role in economic development because they pass laws facilitating the flow of capital. He pointed out that the treaty on double taxation avoidance signed by both countries will have a positive impact on economic exchanges. He added that Canada is in the final process of signing a trade agreement with the European Union, something that could be beneficial to both countries if Serbia becomes a member of the European Union.

All participants agreed that economic ties need to be strengthened. Senator Downe expressed confidence that the new treaty would provide an incentive to Canadian investors to do business in Serbia. Senator Ataullahjan indicated that Serbian knit wear apparel could have great appeal to Canadian women. In the hopes of increasing the number of tourists in each country, a participant proposed the resumption of a direct flight Belgrade-Toronto. Speaker Kinsella spoke of the great opportunities in sea transportation.

Meeting with Mr. Bojan Pajtić, President of the Government of Vojvodina

After welcoming the delegation, Mr. Bojan Pajtić explained that respect for human rights ranks high in the region owing to the many minorities coexisting together. He mentioned that the region is home to the only Roma school in the country. He said that Canada and Serbia have always shared good people-to-people relations that have helped to build stronger economic ties. He is proud that Canadian investors came in the region to build a Magna Plant.

Speaker Kinsella spoke about his interest in the Balkans, adding that people from this part of the world have contributed immensely to building Canada. He stressed the importance of promoting democratic governance and respect of human rights. He expressed confidence that the opening of a Magna Plant would be beneficial for the region. To give the relationship a new impetus, he suggested closer cooperation in the fields of science and agriculture.

Meeting with Mr. István Pásztor, Speaker of the Assembly of Vojvodina

Mr. István Pásztor offered insights on the history of Vojvodina, a region of 2 million people encompassing more than twenty different ethnic communities. He mentioned that this diversity was reflected in the 120-member assembly where six languages are spoken. Projects to preserve the religious heritage of the region are underway.

Speaker Kinsella replied that the delegation was impressed by the ecumenical spirit experienced throughout their visit to Serbia. Inter-faith dialogue and collaboration was one the fundamental keys for living in peace. He identified the field of agriculture as an area of potential collaboration with Canada.

At the end of the meeting, a brochure on the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program was provided along with an invitation for a representative of the administration of the Assembly of Vojvodina to participate in the program hosted by the Parliament of Canada.

Meeting with Representatives of religious minorities

The meeting took place in the only Greek Catholic Church of Novi Sad. The Bishop of the church introduced all the participants present at the meeting. He hoped that the gathering will be the beginning of a new ecumenical tradition. He stated that an organization dedicated to inter-faith collaboration is desirable to build bridges among the different religious communities.

Speaker Kinsella commented on the richness brought by the religious communities of Novi Sad. This heritage appeals to Canadians who share the multicultural and multi-confessional model of society. He indicated that religious communities living in peace understand the importance of freedom of conscience and of religion. Both Senators Downe and Ataullahjan congratulated the religious representatives for respecting each other's religious beliefs.

Meeting with Prof. Dr. Miroslav Vesković, Rector of the University of Novi Sad

The rector thanked the Speaker and the delegation for their visit and expressed the hope that there would be more partnership agreements with Canadian universities. The University of Novi Sad, which has about 50,000 students, has earned a good reputation in Europe and is now interested in bringing in more international students, as well as teachers and researchers.

The participants identified as potential partners the University of Dalhousie and the University of New Brunswick. Both universities offer courses that match the curriculum of the University of Novi Sad. As well, the University of Dalhousie is located in Halifax which is similar to Novi Sad in terms of size. Senator Downe suggested not discounting the University of Prince Edward Island which offers quality education in aquaculture and bio-medical research.

To reach concrete results, Speaker Kinsella proposed the involvement of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). He indicated that he would be willing to contact them and send the rector a proposal to speed up the negotiating process.

Others

While in Belgrade, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with stakeholders and Canadian representatives involved in numerous economic activities. They were also able to meet with representatives from Tennis Canada at a reception organized by the Canadian Embassy. The delegation gained a greater appreciation of the culture of Serbia by visiting various sites throughout their stay in Serbia.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Canadian delegation wish to thank their hosts, His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, His Excellency Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of Montenegro, and His Excellency Dr. Nebojša Stefanović, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

The members of the delegation also wish to thank the staff of the Canadian embassy for their cooperation in organizing the visit. In particular, they express their gratitude to Mr. Emmanuel Kamarianakis, Canadian Chargé d'Affaires to Italy, Mr. Jon Allen, Canadian Chargé d'Affaires to the Holy See and to Mr. Roman Waschuk, Canadian Ambassador to Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro who accompanied the delegation throughout the meetings and activities.

Finally, the delegates wish to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Development and the Library of Parliament for all the documentation provided as part of the preparation for their trip.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate

Travel Costs

Visit by the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate,
and a Parliamentary Delegation, Rome, Vatican City, Skopje,
Podgorica and Belgrade

TRAVEL	\$34,526
ACCOMMODATION	\$4,678
PER DIEMS	\$4,282
PROTOCOL	\$7,683
MISCELLANEOUS	\$277
TOTAL	\$51,446