



Report

**Visit of the Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P.,
Speaker of the House of Commons,
and a Parliamentary Delegation,
Turkey,**

March 10-14, 2014

At the invitation of His Excellency Cemil Çicek, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, the Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, led a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to Turkey from March 10 to 14, 2014.

The delegation has the honour to present its

Report

The Canadian delegation was comprised of the following members:

- The Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons;
- Mrs. Jillian Scheer;
- Mr. Rodger Cuzner, M.P.;
- Mr. Nathan Cullen, M.P.;
- Mr. David Wilks, M.P.;
- Ms. Kenzie Potter, Chief of Staff, Speaker's Office; and
- Ms. Marlene Sandoval, Secretary to the Delegation.

Context – Turkey

Turkey is a parliamentary republic with an estimated population of 74.9 million. The current president was elected by Parliament for a seven-year term in August 2007; the next presidential election, in August 2014, will be by universal direct suffrage, and the next president will serve for a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms. The president appoints the Prime Minister (the leader of the majority party or of the majority coalition), and the Prime Minister appoints the Council of Ministers with the confidence of the Grand National Assembly. Legislative power is vested in the Grand National Assembly, composed of 550 members directly elected for a four-year term. The Justice and Development Party won a third consecutive majority government in the national elections held in June 2011.

Turkey is a member of the G-20 and the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO), a candidate for the European Union and the world's 17th largest economy. Its geographic location and multidimensional foreign policy have allowed it to become a key player in both the regional and the global economies.

The purpose of this visit was to strengthen the relationship between Canada and Turkey by promoting the establishment of ongoing parliamentary dialogue and future parliamentary exchanges. The delegation was particularly interested in matters of trade and investment, the economy, and peace and stability in the region. The visit provided opportunities for discussion on foreign policy issues of international and mutual interest, on subjects arising from both countries' membership in various multilateral organizations, on possibilities for new and continuous joint collaboration, as well as on the bilateral relationship between Canada and Turkey.

Meetings

During its visit to Turkey, the delegation met with:

- His Excellency Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey;
- His Excellency Cemil Çiçek, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly;
- His Excellency Nihat Zeybekci, Minister of Economy;
- His Excellency Mehdi Eker, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock;
- Mr. Sadik Badak, Chairman of the Turkey-Canada Interparliamentary Friendship Group; and
- Representatives of Turkish civil society: Ms. Nur Batur, Mr. Suat Kiniklioglu, and Ms. Feray Salman.

Meeting with His Excellency Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey

President Gül welcomed the delegation and explained that Turkey and Canada continue to have close ties as NATO allies and that the increasing rhythm of high-level visits such as this one has been beneficial to the overall bilateral relationship. In response, Speaker Scheer highlighted the role parliamentary diplomacy can bring in strengthening bilateral relations. President Gül commented that, while the relations between Turkey and Canada are robust, there are many opportunities for improvement. With respect to the Armenian Genocide issue, President Gül was grateful to the Canadian government for the monument inaugurated in Ottawa in 2012. He indicated that the incidents of 1915 took place during World War I, a time of countless disasters and great sufferings for Turkey, and that he hopes both Armenians and Turks can work together to resolve problems in a mutually beneficial manner. In response, Speaker Scheer thanked President Gül for his efforts at reconciliation in the region.

Turning his attention to Turkey's political scene, President Gül indicated that as municipal elections will be held on March 30, debate on issues becomes more heated. He added that all countries have issues, and Turkey is aware of its shortcomings and will continue to implement reforms and improve as a country. Speaker Scheer agreed on the great potential for the bilateral relationship, and remarked that Canadian companies look for stability for their investments, and that as long as the efforts continue, he is confident the relation will develop in a very positive way.

Meeting with His Excellency Cemil Çiçek, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly

Following a warm welcome to the delegation, His Excellency Cemil Çiçek, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, detailed the priorities of the Turkish Parliament in 2014: the economy and trade. Turning his attention to Canada-Turkey relations, Speaker Çiçek indicated that efforts to improve bilateral relations, including through visits by Parliamentary Friendship Groups, had been increasingly important in recent years. Both countries share the same values of respect for democracy and human rights, as well as being NATO members. Turkey also fully supports ongoing plans to improve bilateral relations, such as the development of the Joint Strategic Action Plan, meeting under the Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO), and the beginning of negotiations leading towards a free trade agreement, which he hopes will be

concluded as soon as possible. Speaker Scheer indicated that, based on the increased tempo of high levels visits, it is clear that bilateral relations have been rapidly improving, and issued an invitation to Speaker Çiçek to visit Canada in 2014. He further explained that, while Turkey has been a model for peace and stability in the region, it is Canada's hope that its commitment to respect human rights will also remain strong. Speaker Scheer pointed that Canada is also interested in fostering bilateral trade relations, and would like the growth in two-way trade to be extended to other areas, and commented that the upgrade of the Consulate of Canada in Istanbul from a Consulate to a Consulate-General should also be understood as a signal of the growing importance Canada places on ties with Turkey.

Speaker Çiçek stated that the bloodshed and violence in the region have a direct effect on Turkey, and underlined the importance of the collaboration between Canada and Turkey in the fight against terrorism. Turning to Canada's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Speaker Çiçek expressed Turkey's sorrow for the decision, and noted how extremely delicate and important the issue is for Turkey, and the potential it has to keep undermining bilateral relations. He concluded that Turkey continues to push for the establishment of a Joint Historical Committee to look at the 1915 events, a step which would be viewed positively in Canada, responded Speaker Scheer.

Meeting with His Excellency Nihat Zeybekci, Minister of Economy

Minister Zeybekci emphasized the importance for Turkey to launch negotiations for a free trade agreement with Canada, and highlighted his hope that they will soon be undertaken. He also mentioned that he will be visiting Canada with a large delegation from June 3-6, 2014, and that the first JETCO meeting will be organized during this visit, which will also coincide with the first Turkish Airlines direct flight to Montreal. Minister Zeybekci also made reference to the initiation of negotiations on the Trade in Services Agreement by the World Trade Organization, asking for Canada's support on Turkey's proposal aimed at increasing the mobility of workers/service providers. Speaker Scheer acknowledged Turkey as a new priority emerging market based on Canada's Global Market Action Plan and the momentum that has generated, as well as the importance of the JETCO as a new cooperation mechanism between the two countries.

Meeting with His Excellency Mehdi Eker, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock

Minister Eker expressed the importance of trade in agriculture for the growth in total merchandise trade between Turkey and Canada, and reiterated Turkey's commitment in liberalizing trade, with the exception of genetically modified organisms. He further spoke about Turkey's expectations regarding the implementation of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2010 and its importance in improving bilateral relations and increased trade, and emphasized the need for organizing a joint committee meeting for the implementation of the MOU. Minister Eker and the members of the Canadian delegation exchanged information on the structure of agriculture in the two countries. Speaker Scheer expressed Canada's desire to export live cattle and the desirability of collaboration in research, and Minister Eker indicated the latter was also an area of interest for Turkey.

Meeting with Mr. Sadik Badak, Chairman of the Turkey-Canada Interparliamentary Friendship Group

Mr. Sadik Badak, Chairman of the Turkey-Canada Interparliamentary Friendship Group, hosted a lunch for the delegation which was also attended by other members of the Friendship Group. The event provided an occasion for exchanges on various topics, including parliamentary diplomacy, Canada-Turkey relations as well as current affairs.

Meeting with representatives of Turkish civil society: Ms. Nur Batur, Mr. Suat Kiniklioglu, and Ms. Feray Salman

Award winning journalist and writer Nur Batur; former Member of Parliament and now Director of the Center for Strategic Communication, Suat Kiniklioglu; and General Coordinator of the Human Rights Joint Platform, Feray Salman, joined the members of the delegation for a working lunch at the official residence of the Ambassador of Canada. The discussion focussed on current developments in Turkey as well as prospects for the future.

Other Activities

During this trip, the delegation had the opportunity to participate in several networking opportunities. A dinner was hosted by Speaker Çiçek in the Ceremony Hall of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. To increase its awareness of Turkey's cultural variety and historic wealth, the delegation travelled to Cappadocia, a natural, historical and archeological rich region located in central Anatolia. In Istanbul, the delegation had the opportunity to attend a roundtable with representatives of the Canadian business and financial community, and to take part in the dedication ceremony of the upgraded Consulate General of Canada. Both of these events contributed to a better understanding by the members of the delegation of the business challenges and opportunities made available to Canadian companies in Turkey.

Acknowledgements

The delegation expresses its appreciation to the staff of both the Embassy of Canada in Ankara and the Consulate General of Canada in Istanbul, for their assistance prior to and during the visit. In this respect, of special note were the unconditional support and the availability of Philippe Tremblay, Chargé affairs at the Embassy of Canada in Ankara, and Shawn Steil, Consul-General.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P.,
Speaker of the House of Commons

Travel Costs

Visit of the Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, and a Parliamentary Delegation, Turkey

TRAVEL	\$ 49,262.47
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,442.21
PER DIEMS	\$ 3,888.22
PROTOCOL	\$ 1,262.46
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 1,003.15
TOTAL	\$ 59,858.51