

Canada - United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada - États-Unis
Section canadienne

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 2014 winter meeting of the
Western Governors' Association (WGA)**

Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group

**Las Vegas, Nevada, United States of America
6-7 December, 2014**

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 6–7 December 2014, Mr. Gord Brown, M.P., Co-Chair of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), led a delegation to the 2014 winter meeting of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) in Las Vegas, Nevada. The other delegate was Senator David Wells, and the delegation was accompanied by Ms. June Dewetering, Senior Advisor to the Canadian Section of the IPG.

THE EVENT

The WGA includes the governors from 19 U.S. western states (see the Appendix), as well as from American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The Canadian premiers from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba also participate in the WGA's activities.

The WGA uses six basic strategies to achieve its goals:

- develop and communicate regional policy;
- serve as a leadership forum;
- build regional capacity;
- conduct research and disseminate findings;
- form coalitions and partnerships in order to advance regional interests; and
- build public understanding and support for regional issues and policy positions.

Each year, the WGA holds a summer and a winter meeting. The 2014 winter meeting was chaired by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, WGA Chair. The meeting was also attended by Governors Steve Bullock (Montana), Gary Herbert (Utah), John Hickenlooper (Colorado), Susana Martinez (New Mexico), Matthew Mead (Wyoming) and Butch Otter (Idaho).

DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

The IPG aims to find points of convergence in respective national policies, to initiate dialogue on points of divergence, to encourage the exchange of information, and to promote better understanding among legislators on shared issues of concern. In addition to regular meetings with their federal counterparts, in recent years, members of the Canadian Section of the IPG have attended national and regional meetings of governors. At these events, Canadian delegates take the opportunity to engage in conversations that will help achieve the Canadian Section's objectives, and to communicate the nature and scope of the bilateral relationship.

For the first time, a member of the IPG's Canadian Section made a presentation to the WGA. In particular, Mr. Brown spoke to the governors about the IPG and its current priorities.

The Canadian Section of the IPG intends to attend future meetings of the WGA and to continue its work in advocating Canadian interests.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

During the 2014 winter meeting, the WGA held the following keynote addresses, and plenary and other discussions:

- Keynote: Secretary Ernie Moniz, U.S. Department of Energy
- Infrastructure: Moving Freight & Electricity
- Keynote: Secretary Sally Jewell, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Managing Lands and Species
- The Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
- Improving Services and Opportunities for Veterans
- Governors' Policy Roundtable.

This report summarizes the addresses and discussions at the 2014 winter meeting.

KEYNOTE AND INFRASTRUCTURE: MOVING FREIGHT & ELECTRICITY

Secretary Ernie Moniz, *U.S. Department of Energy*

- The U.S. Department of Energy has a significant “footprint” in the U.S. West, including in terms of nuclear, fossil fuel and renewable sources of energy.
- The impacts of global warming need to be addressed, including in relation to bark beetles, drought, wildfires and water concerns.
- The U.S. Administration supports an “all of the above” energy strategy.
- A great deal of energy development occurs in the U.S. West.
- The “geography” of energy production has shifted, but energy infrastructure has not “caught up.”
- It is not possible to examine energy infrastructure issues without considering the United States' states and regions.
- A great deal of energy is being moved by rail; consequently, energy is competing with other commodities, such as grain.
- Many U.S. Department of Energy sites are adjacent to tribal lands.
- The results of a quadrennial energy review are expected to be released in January 2015.

- The U.S. Administration wants to work with states in minimizing the environmental footprint of energy development; it is important to support environmentally responsible development coincident with a focus on reducing the United States' oil dependence.
- Shale gas development is contributing to a renaissance in manufacturing in the United States.
- Even though the United States exports energy, it continues to be an energy importer.
- Technological change is resulting in lower costs, including in relation to solar and wind energy.
- While the level of investment in electricity transmission has increased dramatically in recent years, an integrated approach is needed; U.S. governors should develop integrated plans.
- Key questions include: is the architecture of the electricity grid what is needed for the 21st century, and will 21st century infrastructure be sufficiently resilient?
- The U.S. Department of Energy has research and development “demonstration and deployment,” or RDD&D, initiatives; the focus of the “demonstration and deployment” efforts varies across energy sources, as different energy sources have different needs and different time lines.
- China's use of coal needs to be addressed; the United States and China will work together in this regard.

KEYNOTE

Secretary Sally Jewell, *U.S. Department of the Interior*

- The U.S. West understands the value and importance of federal lands; for example, they provide beauty and wildlife habitat, and are part of the United States' heritage.
- Public lands can “drive” local economies.
- In relation to public lands, there is an East-West divide.
- The U.S. East is “begging” for public lands to a greater extent than is the U.S. West; in Nevada, for example, 87% of the state's lands are public lands.
- Renewable and non-renewable energy sources are being developed on public lands.
- Challenges in relation to drought, climate change, wildfires and population growth are complex, and the federal government wants to partner with the states in developing solutions to these challenges.
- The sage grouse's habitat faces unprecedented threats, including from wildfires and resource development.

- The federal, state and local governments, as well as developers and private land owners, are involved in a period of “epic” collaboration regarding sage grouse.
- Robust federal and state plans are needed in order to avoid having sage grouse listed as an endangered species.
- Lands should be managed with a view to preservation.
- Strategies are needed to address fire and invasive species.
- Landslides can be avoided through post-fire remediation.
- With limited resources, there is a need to “triage,” and to allocate funds to the areas of greatest need.

MANAGING LANDS AND SPECIES

Neil Kornze, *U.S. Department of the Interior*

- The federal and state governments need to work together, and – at present – they are doing so successfully on a number of issues.
- The federal government strives to provide certainty, and to “drive” successful collaboration and business prosperity.
- It is important to identify “common sense” actions that can contribute to the attainment of goals.
- It is hoped that future generations will be able to enjoy the outdoors in the same manner and to the same extent as past generations.
- In the United States, the population of wild horses is doubling every three to five years; as people are no longer looking for wild, untrained animals, the supply of these horses is rising while the demand for them is falling.
- Although more resources are being committed to addressing the challenge of wild horses, the “battle” is being lost.
- Drugs that are U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved are needed to curb the reproduction of wild horses; spaying and neutering is also an option.

Dan Ashe, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

- “Epic” collaboration is occurring between and among the federal and state governments, and these efforts are “building muscle memory” and showing the governments how to “do business” with each other in a different way.
- The relationship between the federal and state governments is like a good marriage; while it is hard work and can be “messy,” it is worthwhile, and when “hard spots” arise, it is important to “return to the table” and continue talking.
- Legislation must be implemented as it is written, and not as the way that stakeholders would like it to be; like all other statutes, the *Endangered Species Act* has “blemishes” and there is room for improvement.

- There is a good chance that sage grouse will not be listed as an endangered species.
- Because of “epic” collaboration among stakeholders, the arctic grayling – which was listed as a threatened species – is no longer in danger.
- Being listed as a threatened or endangered species is like a “diagnosis,” and can bring about the actions that are needed to reverse the “diagnosis.”

THE CANADA–UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Gord Brown, M.P., *Canadian House of Commons*

- For most of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group’s history, the Group’s primary focus has been relationships with members of the U.S. Congress, where members work to find points of convergence in respective national policies, to talk about points of divergence, to exchange information and to promote better understanding on shared issues of concern; for many decades, those objectives were attained almost exclusively through meetings with members of Congress in Washington, D.C. and at an annual meeting held alternately in Canada and the United States.
- About a decade ago, members of the IPG’s Canadian Section augmented its meetings with members of Congress with interactions with governors and state legislators; the WGA’s summer meeting was among the first of the meetings that were attended, and members of the Canadian Section have regularly attended the WGA’s summer meetings since then.
- The Canadian Section always finds discussions with governors and state legislators to be enlightening, and has been struck by the extent to which some U.S. concerns mirror Canadian concerns; these include, for example, energy, infrastructure to move energy and agricultural products, and the financing of infrastructure through public-private partnerships, all of which have been discussed at WGA meetings.
- There is ample evidence that U.S. western governors and premiers from Canada’s western provinces have taken joint actions for mutual benefit; one example is the enhanced drivers’ licence initiative between Washington State and British Columbia, and another is joint efforts to ensure that air travel between Canada and the United States is both secure and timely.
- Many Canadian “snow birds” are drawn to the weather and other amenities in some of the WGA states, and either vacation or establish a second home there; the “snow birds” and other tourists make sizable economic contributions in some U.S. regions.
- Canada and the United States share a common economic space, and the two countries need to work together as partners to ensure that North America is able to compete successfully with the rest of the world; the *North American Free Trade Agreement* is now 20 years old, and some commentators are discussing renewed trilateral efforts.

- In December 2014, the inaugural meeting of federal legislators from Canada, the United States and Mexico was held in Washington, D.C., the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade is undertaking a study of the potential for increased Canada–U.S.–Mexico trade and investment, and members of the Canadian Section recently met with General David Petraeus and former U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick to talk about the task force they co-chaired and its resulting report, entitled *North America: Time for a New Focus*, as a roadmap for the future in terms of North American cooperation and prosperity.
- While there are areas where Canada–U.S.–Mexico efforts make sense, there are also areas where bilateral undertakings between Canada and the United States are the better approach; in that context, as the Canadian Section continues its work, the shared border is likely to be a key focus.
- Canada and the United States need to ensure that legitimate people and goods can move across the shared border in an efficient and secure manner, that the integrated supply chains that support bilateral trade are functioning as they should, and that threats are addressed at the earliest possible point and ideally as far from the border as possible.
- To avoid “the tyranny of small differences,” regulatory harmonization between Canada and the United States is another key focus for the IPG’s Canadian Section; regulatory differences that cannot be justified increase costs and undermine profitability.
- The Canadian Section also focuses on energy, believing that North American energy security – one aspect of which is the Keystone XL pipeline proposal – is an achievable goal and must be a priority for a range of reasons, not the least of which is the importance of energy for the economic growth and prosperity that Canadian and American citizens and businesses want.

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

Some of the WGA’s governors discussed efforts within their state that are designed to improve services and opportunities for veterans.

Governor Brian Sandoval, *Governor of Nevada*

- Nevada’s Green Zone Initiative, which is a “one-stop shop” that started in 2012, is focused on finding local policy solutions for veterans.
- In helping veterans and their families, which have made significant sacrifices for the United States, it is important to focus on all of their needs, including those relating to education, health and employment.

Governor Matthew Mead, *Governor of Wyoming*

- The United States has been at war for more than a decade.
- Military deployments and returns are very emotional, but for very different reasons, as the former are characterized by sadness and the latter by joy.
- Each March, a “welcome home” ceremony occurs in four or five Wyoming towns; these ceremonies are designed to thank veterans of the Vietnam, Korea, World War II and Afghanistan conflicts.
- It is important for military personnel who are currently serving to see how veterans are treated; if veterans are not treated well, fewer individuals are likely to volunteer for military service.
- Wyoming has a very good veteran outreach service, and is connecting veterans with the housing, education, health, employment and other services that they need.

Governor Gary Herbert, *Governor of Utah*

- It is important to recognize the sacrifices made by those who serve in the military, as well as by their families and friends; the attitude should be one of gratitude.
- While it is reasonable to hate war, it is important to love veterans.
- Veterans should be assisted as they reintegrate into society; reintegration can be difficult, and can be associated with suicides, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues.
- Utah has significant outreach efforts to veterans, including in relation to health, education and employment.
- The skills acquired in military service can be “translated into” education credits, and can be applied in civilian employment.

Governor Butch Otter, *Governor of Idaho*

- It is important to remember and celebrate military personnel who have paid the ultimate price, as well as to assist those who need help now.
- There is a need to learn, from one war to the next, how to “bring veterans home.”
- The future of the United States can be seen by looking at how veterans are being taken care of today.
- Idaho has a program that provides incentives to employers that hire veterans.
- The military does a great job of educating people in areas that have civilian applications, including teamwork, punctuality and leadership.

GOVERNORS' POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Reid Wilson, of the *Washington Post*, posed questions to Governors Sandoval, Herbert, Mead and Otter.

Question: How is the state-federal relationship evolving, and what is its current state?

Governor Otter:

- The WGA's governors look to each other for solutions in a range of areas, including the environment and economic growth.
- The WGA's governors share common attitudes and issues – including in relation to water, endangered species and public lands – and share best practices with each other.

Governor Sandoval:

- The WGA states have a high proportion of public lands; for example, 87% of Nevada is public land.
- The relationship between Nevada and the federal government ebbs and flows.
- It is important to have good relationships with federal agencies and to have opportunities to speak directly with federal decision makers, as their decisions affect the states.

Question: What comments about health care are relevant?

Governor Herbert:

- It is important to be willing to compromise and to work together to solve problems.
- Partisanship can hinder the identification of solutions.
- The states, which created a federalized system of government as a partnership, often feel that they are junior – rather than equal – partners.
- The concept of federalism is aligned with “laboratories of democracy” and pilot projects that enable jurisdictions to learn from each other.
- The United States' governors were not consulted prior to the development of the *Affordable Care Act*.
- Regarding health care, each state needs a solution that works for it.
- There is a need to bring back the concept of cooperative federalism and partnership between the state and federal governments.
- The states are the best hope for America, both economically and socially.

Governor Mead:

- The ability for governors to have discussions with federal agencies is vital.
- Regarding health care, the outcome would have been better had the federal government consulted the states' governors prior to the development of the *Affordable Care Act*.
- Even if the states' governors do not like the *Affordable Care Act*, they must determine how to "make the best of a bad situation" for the benefit of their citizens.
- The WGA's governors "move the ball forward," regardless of whether they are Republicans or Democrats.

Question: As the United States moves toward 2016, and recognizing that the electoral outcomes in November 2014 were good for Republicans, what message should be sent to the country and to voters?

Governor Sandoval:

- Nevada is largely Republican.
- A key message is: get to work and accomplish great things.
- Working together and developing solutions are important.

Governor Herbert:

- With the Republicans controlling the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, people will focus on whether they can govern, lead and "get things done."
- It is important to make decisions while considering opposing points of view.
- Hopefully, the Republicans will work with the Democrats and develop bipartisan support.

Governor Mead:

- It is unacceptable for Republicans and Democrats to blame each other for a failure to "get things done"; they need to work together constructively, and to develop solutions to problems.
- The United States' governors do not have the luxury of not "getting things done."
- The states are the laboratories of democracy; for example, the states undertake pilot projects to determine "what works" and, if failures occur, the state – rather than the entire nation – is hurt.
- The strength of the United States is in its states.

Question: What advice should be given to Senator McConnell and Speaker Boehner?

Governor Otter:

- To save the republic, there is a need to return to its design: the entity that was created – the federal government – should not be greater than the creators – the states.
- The federal government should not “invade” areas of state jurisdiction.

Question: In the next U.S. Congress, how powerful will the U.S. West be?

Governor Herbert:

- In the next Congress, the U.S. West will experience a net gain in terms of representation.

Governor Otter:

- Some Idaho federal legislators are likely to hold key positions in the next Congress.

Question: Will health care be an issue in the next U.S. Congress?

Governor Herbert:

- “Doing nothing” is not a solution.
- Medicaid is meant to be a transition, not a permanent state.

Governor Mead:

- Regarding Medicaid, each state has different needs.

Governor Otter:

- Idaho does not give entitlements without some notion of personal responsibility; personal responsibility and “paying for performance” are important concepts.

Question: Will the WGA states enact common core legislation?

Governor Mead:

- The common core standards were a government-led initiative, while school curriculum is a local school board issue.
- High educational standards must exist, as “middle-of-the-road” education is not acceptable.

Governor Herbert:

- The common core standards are the only thing that has been “rolled out” more poorly than the *Affordable Care Act*.
- While everyone supports higher educational standards, it is important to ensure that the states are in control and that the standards meet each state’s requirements.
- School curriculum must be locally controlled, and testing must be appropriate.
- The appropriate collection and protection of data enable the making of good decisions.

Governor Sandoval:

- Nevada’s legislature will be debating the common core standards.
- Children should receive the education that they deserve.
- School curriculum needs to be designed locally while ensuring that standards are met.

Governor Otter:

- A primer is needed on what common core standards are, and what they are not.
- In the past, it was only possible to measure the educational attainment of children within a state; it is important to be able to measure attainment across states and across nations.
- Appropriate data collection regarding a variety of educational issues should occur.
- School curriculum must be created at the local level.

Question: Who is your favourite presidential candidate for 2016?

Governor Otter:

- The next presidential candidates should be governors.

Governor Sandoval:

- While there are many strong presidential candidates, it is important that they have executive experience.

Governor Herbert:

- The Democrats have a “short bench,” but presidential candidates include Hillary Rodham Clinton, Vice-President Joe Biden, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Governor Martin O’Malley.
- The Republicans have many options for their presidential candidate, including governors and members of Congress.
- The presidential candidates should have executive-branch experience.

Governor Mead:

- The presidential candidates should have executive, as well as private-sector, experience.
- Governors, both former and current, make good presidential candidates.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Janis G. Johnson,
Senator, Co-Chair
Canada-United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group

Gord Brown, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group

APPENDIX

U.S. STATES REPRESENTED IN THE WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Alaska	New Mexico
Arizona	North Dakota
California	Oklahoma
Colorado	Oregon
Hawaii	South Dakota
Idaho	Texas
Kansas	Utah
Montana	Washington
Nebraska	Wyoming
Nevada	

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	2014 winter meeting of the Western Governors' Association (WGA)
DESTINATION	Las Vegas, Nevada, United States of America
DATES	6–7 December 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. David Wells, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Gord Brown, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. June Dewetering, Senior Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$3,022.86
ACCOMMODATION	\$2,006.64
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 540.64
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 790.79
TOTAL	\$6,360.93