



Report

**Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella,
Speaker of the Senate,
United Nations, New York,**

November 10-11, 2011

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, visited the United Nations, from November 10-11, 2011 and has the honour of tabling a

Report

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

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

Mrs. Ann Kinsella;

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

Mr. Gérald Lafrenière, Secretary to the Delegation and Deputy Principal Clerk, Parliamentary Exchanges.

Context – United Nations

Canada was one of the founding members of the United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations in 1945. Historically, Canada has played a key role in supporting the UN and its activities. Today, it continues this role by being one of the largest contributors to the United Nations budget and also one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.

Canada's current goals include assisting the UN in the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights on the international stage, which includes providing humanitarian assistance, political mediation and capacity building to vulnerable states. Canada is also seeking to improve the UN's management and supports fiscal restraint efforts. It is encouraging the UN to bring in measures of greater accountability and to seek improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of UN programs.

Objectives of the visit:

The objectives of the visit were to:

- enhance relations between Canada and the United Nations;
- enhance bilateral relations with a number of countries whose permanent representatives to Canada are located in New York, including highlighting the range of Canada's interests with these countries, promoting educational exchanges, discussing research sharing in the area of agriculture and aquaculture, and advocating greater collaboration between container shipping ports;
- highlight the range of Canada's interests with the United Nations in the areas of international development, security and human rights;
- encourage ongoing parliamentary dialogue by further promoting parliamentary exchanges;

- discuss foreign policies with respect to issues of international and mutual interest; and
- pursue good relations in all fields of contact.

Meetings – United Nations

At the United Nations, the delegation met with:

- Mr. BAN Ki-moon, Secretary General to the United Nations; and
- His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the United Nations General Assembly.

In addition to the meetings at the United Nations, the Speaker observed a session of the United Nations General Assembly and also attended a briefing provided to members of the General Assembly on the outcomes of the G20 Summit in Cannes in November, 2011.

While at the United Nations, the Speaker held informal discussions with Permanent Representatives to the United Nations from Australia, Italy, Germany, Croatia and Japan.

In New York, the delegation met with:

- His Excellency Lhatu Wangchuk, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada;
- His Excellency Abderrahim Ould Hadrami, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada;
- His Excellency João Soares Da Gama, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada; and
- His Excellency Narcís Casal de Fonsdeviela, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada.

Meeting with Mr. BAN Ki-moon, Secretary General to the United Nations

The Secretary General welcomed the Speaker to the United Nations. He noted Canada's outstanding contribution to the UN. He made reference to his recent visit to Canada and his discussions with Prime Minister Harper at the G-20 meetings in Cannes. Speaker Kinsella spoke of the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference to be held in Canada in October 2012. He added that it would be an honour to have the Secretary General attend the conference.

The Secretary General and the Speaker then discussed the issue of religious accommodation. They shared views on the work of Jorge Sampaio, Former President of the Portuguese Republic and the current United Nations Secretary-General's High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. The Alliance planned to hold its fourth meeting in Doha in December. It is a UN initiative aimed at crossing cultural and religious divides between communities. Also mentioned was the interfaith dialogue initiative of Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud,

the King of Saudi Arabia. It was agreed that such initiatives and other ongoing projects were essential for greater accommodation and a better understanding of differences throughout the world.

The Speaker then raised the issue of the work of the UN Human Rights Council. The Secretary General indicated that while it has come under some criticism, its work is advancing. He mentioned the Universal Periodic Review, a process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years, as a positive step forward. One cycle of the UPR has been completed and the second is about to commence. While not all recommendations are agreed to by those being reviewed, a major accomplishment is that the established process for review has become accepted.

When Canada's contribution to the UN was raised, the Secretary General was extremely complimentary. He indicated that Canada was one of the UN's exemplary countries, particularly in the areas of peace and security. He cited Canada's involvement in Haiti and Afghanistan, even though not a UN initiative, as examples of Canada's contribution to peace and security around the world. In addition, he congratulated Canada on its commitment to development. The Secretary General also complimented the high level Canadian staff who work at the UN and noted their dedication to their work. The Speaker thanked the Secretary General for having taken time to meet with him and added that the work undertaken by the UN was valued by all Canadians.

Meeting with His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the United Nations General Assembly

The Speaker thanked His Excellency for meeting with him. They discussed the G-20 briefing that both had attended earlier in the day. The President indicated that such briefings were essential. While many view the G-20 meetings as extremely important in that they play a key role, for example, in stabilizing the global economy that was in crisis, others are concerned that not all countries have input in the discussions and the proposed solutions. He added that the Secretary General had also held a pre-G-20 briefing to hear the concerns of members before he attended the meetings in Cannes. It was mentioned that this provides greater transparency and alleviates concerns that some have raised regarding the secrecy of such meetings.

The Speaker spoke about the distinction between parliamentary diplomacy and the diplomacy of the executive branch. He added that as a parliamentarian, his role was to oversee the work of the executive and of the ambassadors representing Canada. The President indicated that Canada was a good contributor to the work of the UN and that Canada should be proud of the work of its staff in New York.

The Speaker questioned the President regarding his priorities in the coming year. The President outlined the four main focus areas: Mediation for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes; Sustainable Development and Global Prosperity; Improving Disaster Prevention and Response; and UN Reform.

Working Luncheon

At the invitation of Ambassador Gilles Rivard, Deputy Permanent Representative to Canada to the United Nations, the Speaker held a working luncheon with: His Excellency Lhatu Wangchuk, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada; His Excellency, Abderrahim Ould Hadrami, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada; His Excellency João Soares Da Gama, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada; and His Excellency Narcís Casal de Fonsdeviela, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the United Nations and Ambassador to Canada.

The Speaker's opening remarks touched on Canada as a country and on the importance Canada places on democracy and promoting democratic values throughout the world. He added that parliamentary diplomacy was essential and explained the distinction between such exchanges and those at the executive level. He complimented the permanent representatives on undertaking such challenging tasks at the UN.

Post secondary education and particularly promoting exchanges of students and academics were also mentioned. The Speaker indicated that while technology and infrastructure exists to connect people around the world, such as e-learning, this should not be viewed as being equivalent to visiting and studying in another country. His Excellency, Abderrahim Ould Hadrami, Permanent Representative of Mauritania indicated that many Mauritanian leaders were educated in Canada and he supports initiatives that would assist in such exchanges. His Excellency João Soares Da Gama, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, indicated that scholarships that were previously available should be reinstituted as this would encourage students to travel to Canada. The Speaker stated that there were many universities and colleges in Canada and encouraged the representatives to be in touch with them and the provinces, who are responsible for education, for assistance. Canadian Ambassador Rivard noted that the focus should not only be on university education but also on vocational studies that are available in Canada. The Speaker indicated that he is also a fervent promoter of Canadians students studying abroad. All participants agreed that education plays an important role in ensuring security in different regions of the world.

One of the main issues discussed was the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict which has dominated the UN for the last several months. All agreed that until this question is resolved, tension in the region will remain. His Excellency Lhatu Wangchuk, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan, indicated that progress is possible but that leadership must come from the Israelis and the Palestinians. Both parties must realize that in any negotiation, some compromise is needed. His Excellency Narcís Casal de Fonsdeviela, Permanent Representative of Andorra, added that the more you analyze this issue, the more complex it becomes. He suggested taking a step back to try and see the bigger picture.

Also discussed was the recent G-20 Cannes meetings and its recommendations. The Speaker indicated that it was important that the G-20 countries do not dominate such discussions and that it was important to set up procedures that allow others to contribute and be heard.

The ambassadors agreed that Canada is a world leader in many areas. They praised the work that Canada has undertaken at the UN and added that they wished to see Canada play a more active role on some of the main issues. They viewed Canada as being well placed to provide leadership on some of the contentious issues facing world leaders. It is seen as a country that does not have a hidden agenda and can rely on its sound public policies.

They thanked the Speaker for this wonderful initiative and noted that they appreciate Canada's friendly leadership. The Speaker closed the luncheon by thanking the guests for attending and for their frank assessments on the varied subjects raised.

Remembrance Day

On November 11, 2011, the Speaker participated in a solemn wreath laying at the Remembrance Day Observance at the British Garden, Hanover Square. In addition to honouring the sacrifice of our Canadian soldiers, past and present, the event also affirmed the endorsement by Canada of the inclusion of Canadian September 11 victims in the Garden. This event emphasized the long history, shared ideals and sacrifices of Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and other Commonwealth countries.

At the ceremony following the wreath laying event, the delegation met with:

- Mr. Danny Lopez, Consul General of the United Kingdom to New York;
- Mrs. Geneive Brown Metzger, Consul General of Jamaica to New York;
- Mr. Victor E. Stewart, Chairman, British Memorial Garden Trust;
- Mr. Rodney Johnson, Vice-Chairman and CFO, British Memorial Garden Trust;
- Mr. Keith Taylor, Chairman, The British Soldiers' Fund; and
- Mr. John C. Harvey, President, St. George's Society.

Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta – American Association

The Speaker participated in the liturgy and solemn investiture ceremony of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta – American Association, at the Cathedral of Saint Patrick. The delegation met with His Excellency Frà John Dunlap, Member of the Sovereign Council, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, who is based in New York City, and discussed many of the current humanitarian projects that the Order has undertaken throughout the world.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Canadian delegation would like to express their gratitude to all the staff of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations for their excellent efforts in making the visit such a success. In particular, the delegates want to thank Ambassador Gilles Rivard, and Mr. Jeremy Adler. In addition, the delegation would be remiss if it did not recognize the outstanding work of Consul General John Prato and members of his team, particularly Kibui Pyron and Paula Kennedy.

They also wish to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Library of Parliament for the documentation provided as part of the preparation for this visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate

Travel Costs

Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate,
United Nations, New York, U.S.A.

TRAVEL	\$ 7,129.93
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 3,385.76
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,116.63
PROTOCOL	\$ 1,388.04
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 53.04
TOTAL	\$ 13,073.40