



Report

**Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella,
Speaker of the Senate,
and a Parliamentary Delegation,
Republic of Colombia,**

January 16-20, 2012

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and a delegation of Senators visited the Republic of Colombia from January 16 to 20, 2012.

The delegation has the honour of tabling its

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

The Honourable Joan Fraser, Senator

The Honourable Nancy Ruth, Senator

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

Ms. Jolène Savoie, Secretary to the Delegation

Context – Colombia

The Republic of Columbia is located in the north-western part of South America. It is bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the north, Brazil to the east, Ecuador and Peru to the south, and Panama and the North Pacific Ocean to the west. Measuring 1,138,914 square kilometres, it is the fourth-largest country in South America.

Colombia is an established democracy with stable institutions and an active civil society. Nevertheless, it has endured an internal armed conflict for the past fifty years, representing the longest running conflict in the Americas. Around 45.5% of Colombians live below the poverty line, and the country continues to face large income disparities. The advancement of government social programs has long been hindered by Colombia's ongoing conflicts with armed groups and drug cartels, as well as numerous human rights violations. Progress has been made, however, in improving the security of the country.

The Republic of Columbia is a constitutional, multi-party democracy under the constitution of July 1991. A unitary republic with a presidential regime, the national government has executive, legislative, and judicial branches established with separation of powers and checks and balances. The president is both head of state and of government, and heads a cabinet. The legislature consists of a bicameral Congress made up of a 102-member Senate and a 166-member House of Representatives. This includes 161 members elected to represent the 32 departments and the Capital District, two to represent the Afro-Columbian population, one to represent the indigenous population, one to represent Colombians living abroad, and one for other political minorities.

Objectives

The objectives of the visit were to:

- enhance relations between Canada and Colombia;
- encourage ongoing parliamentary dialogue by further promoting parliamentary exchanges;
- highlight the range of Canada's interests in the region;
- discuss foreign policies with respect to issues of international and mutual interest;
- promote educational exchanges;
- promote research sharing in the area of agriculture;
- promote collaboration between container shipping ports; and
- pursue good relations in all fields of contact.

Meetings

In Colombia, the delegation met with: H.E. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia; Mr. Angelino Garzón, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia; The Most Reverend Rubén Salazar, Archbishop of Bogotá; Mr. Juan Camilo Restrepo Salazar, Colombian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; Ms. María Fernanda Campo Saavedra, Colombian Minister of National Education and Ms. Marta Lucía Villegas Botero, President of ICETEX; Admiral Ernesto Durán González, General Maritime Director of DIMAR; Ms. Teresita Del Carmen Beltrán Ospina, General Manager of the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and Mr. Enrique Triviño Galeano, Manager of the Colombian Federation of Potato Producers (FEDEPAPA); representatives from the Colombian National Armed Forces; representatives of the Port of Cartagena; and representatives of the Corporation of Science and Technology (COTECMAR).

Meeting with H.E. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The meeting provided an opportunity for the delegation to discuss a wide array of topics. President Santos spoke about multiple opportunities for Canadians in Colombia including education, forestry, water and biodiversity, while Speaker Kinsella explained the opportunities that exist with the Atlantic Gateway and the extensive CN railway system throughout Canada and the United States. Also discussed was the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which came into force August 15 2011, and the opportunities and advantages this union would bring. President Santos elaborated on some of the hardships his country has survived such as the many civil wars, political violence, and guerrillas. He emphasized the tremendous progress in Colombia and that respect for human rights is now at the core of the Colombian constitution. Recognizing the wrongdoings in a country's history and in maintaining a forward outlook was viewed as important by all concerned.

Education was another subject of interest, notably the need to increase exchanges between students and to provide affordable, quality education. The importance of compromise and governability in maintaining a strong democracy was also discussed. Other subjects included the Organization of American States (OAS), respect for human rights, and women's rights.

Meeting with Mr. Angelino Garzón, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia

At a luncheon hosted by Mr. Angelino Garzón in honour of the Canadian delegation, the guests discussed the current strength of the relationship between Canada and Colombia, human rights, the importance of promoting and increasing the number of student exchanges, the benefits of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, the International Labour Organization (ILO), labour rights and labour mobility.

Meeting with The Most Reverend Rubén Salazar, Archbishop of Bogota

The meeting with the Archbishop provided the delegation with an opportunity to discuss Colombian history and culture, the role of civil society, human rights, justice and peace. The Archbishop noted that many of the current problems in Colombia have their roots in the Spanish conquest, and that geography plays a significant role in civil unrest. He explained some of the social problems that have arisen from mining, including exploitation of the land, segregation of society and ecological issues. He also spoke of the armed conflict in Colombia and the government's prudent approach toward it. Education exchange opportunities between Canadian and Colombian students in catholic universities were discussed, as well as opportunities for women.

The Archbishop emphasized the Catholic Church's presence in many aspects of Colombian life in both urban and remote settings and the priests' role as social leaders in the fight for human rights, poverty and in aiding those who have been displaced. He also raised the subject of indigenous peoples, legislative initiatives for the return of land and mining problems in Colombia.

Meeting with Mr. Juan Camilo Restrepo Salazar, Colombian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

With the Colombian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the delegation discussed opportunities the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement would provide. The minister explained the management of Colombia's forests and the Speaker suggested Canada and Colombia promote student exchanges in the field of forestry to share new technologies. Illegal mining, the world's food production and land restitution were also considered.

Meeting with Ms. María Fernanda Campo Saavedra, Colombian Minister of National Education and Ms. Marta Lucía Villegas Botero President of ICETEX

The delegation met with the Colombian Minister of Education and the President of ICETEX, the Colombian agency for management of scholarships and educational exchanges. During the meeting, members of the delegation had the opportunity to exchange views on a number of topics including the importance of international studies and the need to develop the competencies required in a globalized world. Minister Saavedra spoke about Colombia's desire to continue strengthening and increasing mobility and scientific knowledge, and to promote bilingual education in English and in French through ICETEX programs. Additional related topics raised were the Colombian government's responsibility to preserve the cultures and customs of indigenous peoples through education, and women and education.

On education exchange between Canada and Colombia, all were agreed that many opportunities exist and should be maximized. Ms Botero explained some of the programs currently in place with various countries, and Speaker Kinsella suggested the Minister write to the provincial education ministers to engage them in discussions on possible future opportunities for exchanges between Colombian and Canadian students.

Meeting with Admiral Ernesto Durán González, General Maritime Director of DIMAR

The delegation attended a presentation given by representatives of the General Maritime Authority (DIMAR) that focused on the organization's roles and responsibilities. DIMAR is the military body responsible for advising the Colombian government on policies and programs relating to maritime activities. It is also responsible for enforcing these policies within its jurisdiction. DIMAR reports to the Ministry of National Defence.

The DIMAR presentation addressed the government's "Democratic prosperity" policy under President Juan Manuel Santos. This policy aims to cement the security gains made by the former President Alvaro Uribe, while also creating more jobs and reducing poverty. Due to Colombia's geographic location and the extent of its territorial waters, DIMAR has important maritime responsibilities that have an impact on the economy (proximity of maritime trade and markets), the environment (protecting biodiversity), governance (border surveillance, maritime interdiction operations) and transport (coordinating the logistics of maritime transportation).

Meeting with Ms. Teresita Del Carmen Beltrán Ospina, General Manager of the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA) and Mr. Enrique Triviño Galeano, Manager of the Colombian Federation of Potato Producers (FEDEPAPA)

The Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA) is Colombia's regulatory agency responsible for plant and animal sanitary control. FEDEPAPA is the local potato growers association responsible for interacting with government to promote the well-

being and prosperity of Colombian potato growers, to increase area and productivity, and to research and develop new technologies for better potato crops.

The meeting provided an occasion for the delegation to discuss opportunities for cooperation between the two countries in the agricultural sector. Speaker Kinsella explained his desire to have Canadian and Colombian agricultural researchers connect to share best practices. Mr. Triviño noted that FEDEPAPA has participated in a research project with Canadian universities on potato nutrition and on sanitation in an effort to address soil related diseases. He talked about the richness of the soil and the tropical Colombian climate that are conducive to rich crops, explaining also that one of Colombia's major problems is oversupply of potatoes. Speaker Kinsella suggested Canada and Colombia could collaborate to contribute to the global problem of food insufficiency. Marketing, trade, and the decline in training for professionals in the agricultural sector were also discussed.

Meeting with representatives from the Colombian National Armed Forces

The Colombian National Armed Forces hosted the delegation for lunch and provided a tour of the installations of the Arc Bolivar Naval Base. Officers presented an overview of the work carried out in the region under the four strategic objectives: protection of the population and resources and consolidation of territorial control; neutralizing the financing of illegal drug trafficking; strategic deterrence; and maritime and fluvial safety.

Meeting with representatives of the Port of Cartagena

The delegation visited the Port of Cartagena, where it met with:

- Mr. Alfonso Sala Trujillo, General Manager;
- Mr. Juan Carlos Acosta, Contecar Manager;
- Mr. Giovanni Benedetti, Sales and Marketing Director;
- Mr. Gusavo Florez, Operations Director;
- Mr. Eduardo Bustamante, IT Director; and
- Ms. Karina Kure, Human Resources Director.

Following presentations by each director on their respective department's activities, the delegation toured the Master Plan and received an in-depth explanation of the Port's operations. The Manga Terminal and the Contecar Terminal were also toured. The possibility of new strategic partnerships between Canadian and Colombian ports was discussed, which would give freight carriers access to the North American market by way of Atlantic Canada. Speaker Kinsella invited the Port of Cartagena officials to further explore these potential alliances.

Meeting with representatives of the Corporation of Science and Technology (COTECMAR)

The representatives of COTECMAR provided the delegation a tour of its shipyard and a presentation on the corporation and its work. COTECMAR is a state owned, non-profit science and technology corporation that designs and builds the new generation of surface ships for the Navy. Its vision is to do so by 2022 to establish itself as a leader in the Latin American shipbuilding industry. The company also envisions that ships and riverine traffic will increase their participation in the repair market and commercial construction, reflecting the achieved technological independence from Colombia in the shipyard industry. The company's mission is to develop scientific and technological capabilities through generating products and services that meet the needs of the Navy and the industry.

Panel discussion on human rights at Sergio Arboleda University

The delegation participated in a panel discussion on human rights at the Sergio Arboleda University with other Colombian officials, including Mr. Frank Joseph Pearl González, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development. Members of the audience included officials from the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and across government, representatives of the private sector, academics, and members of civil society. Speaker Kinsella's presentation focused on human rights and on the ways in which the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement may be seen as an instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Canadian delegation wish to thank His Excellency Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, for hosting the official visit, for his warm welcome and for the generous hospitality.

The members of the delegation also wish to thank the staff of the Canadian embassy in Colombia for their cooperation in organizing the visit. In particular, Mr. Tim Martin, Canadian Ambassador to Colombia, accompanied the delegation throughout the meetings and activities in Bogota. Thanks are due as well to Ms. Sara Cohen and Mr. André Vallée, who were instrumental in organizing the visit and its implementation.

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

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate

Travel Costs

Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate,
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of Colombia

TRAVEL	\$ 22,321.32
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 9,660.81
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,593.69
PROTOCOL	\$ 2,989.04
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 7,488.45
TOTAL	\$ 45,053.31