

Canada – United Kingdom
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada – Royaume-Uni

Report of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

Bilateral visit to the United Kingdom

London, England and Belfast, Northern Ireland

From October 24 to 27, 2022

Report

The Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association (RUUK) appointed a delegation of seven parliamentarians to participate in bilateral meetings in London, England and Belfast, Northern Ireland from 24 to 27 October 2022. The delegation was composed of Mr. James Maloney, MP and head of delegation; Hon. Patricia Bovey, Senator; Hon. Tony Dean, Senator; Hon. Michael MacDonald, Senator; Mr. Kody Blois, MP, Mr. Matt Jeneroux, MP, and Mr. Mike Lake, MP. The delegation was supported by Association Secretary, Mr. Freddy Bobo Mukinayi and Association Advisor, Ms. Nicole Sweeney.

This mission sought to strengthen the partnership between the parliaments of Canada and the United Kingdom (U.K.) and to equip parliamentarians to advocate and scrutinise matters relating to Canada-U.K. affairs in their respective parliamentary roles. RUUK remained actively engaged with U.K. parliamentarians throughout the pandemic and the three key themes for this mission – trade, foreign policy, and Brexit and Northern Ireland – emerged from discussions held during a series of [bilateral meetings](#) that took place in 2021.

Canada and the U.K. are close allies and RUUK delegates are committed to fostering a mutually productive working relationship with their U.K. counterparts. Since returning to Canada, several of the delegates have been in contact with parliamentarians and other interlocutors they met on the ground to pursue further cooperation in areas including parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals and combatting loneliness.

VISIT TO LONDON, ENGLAND

From 24 to 26 October 2022, the delegation participated in bilateral meetings in London. Delegates spent their first day at the Canadian High Commission in London (Canada House), where they met with the Canadian High Commissioner to the U.K., His Excellency Ralph Goodale, as well as various officials and representatives from policy think tanks. The remaining two days were spent at Westminster, meeting with British parliamentarians, both as individuals and as committees or associations.

A. Canada House – Monday, 24 October 2022

The delegates began their mission at Canada House where they participated in four separate sessions. The three overarching themes for their mission – trade, foreign policy, and Brexit and Northern Ireland – were a focal point of discussions, along with other key issues including frozen pensions.

1. Briefing with the Canada House Leadership Team

This opening session was led by Deputy High Commissioner, Rob Fry, and six members of the Canada House Leadership team: Celeste Kinsey (Minister-Counsellor, Political and Public Affairs, Global Affairs Canada), Brigadier General Dwayne Parsons (Canadian Defence Liaison Staff, Department of National Defence), Xochi Bryan (Migration

Programme Manager, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), Andrew Smith (Senior Trade Commissioner, Global Affairs Canada), Colin Barker (Senior Trade Commissioner, Global Affairs Canada) and Andrew Cook (Senior Political Officer, Global Affairs Canada). The team shared their insights on various aspects of the Canada-U.K. relationship and provided an overview of the U.K.'s political and economic context.

Delegates arrived in the U.K. at a time of relative political turbulence. On 24 October 2022, Rishi Sunak was declared the next leader of the U.K.'s Conservative Party, officially becoming the U.K.'s prime minister on 25 October 2022. Mr. Sunak replaced Liz Truss, who had in turn replaced Boris Johnson as prime minister on 6 September 2022. Further, as is discussed below, the Northern Ireland Assembly was not in session, having collapsed in February 2022, and a deadline by which time the Northern Ireland Secretary of State was expected to intervene and call fresh elections was imminent (28 October 2022).

Political and economic context

Officials noted that, while the U.K. was navigating a challenging political period, it remained a strong democracy and described claims that its political fabric was under threat as “sensationalized.” Andrew Cook provided an overview of the 1922 Committee, which establishes the rules for choosing and changing the leader of the U.K.'s Conservative party. The [1922 Committee](#) acts as a “[sounding board](#)” of opinion among Conservative party members and is generally considered to wield considerable influence in the party. Mr. Cook explained that, under the terms of the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022, whomever replaced then Prime Minister Truss would not have to call a general election until January 2025, meaning the U.K. could enjoy a period of political stability.

While underscoring that the U.K. is the world's sixth largest economy, officials also discussed some of the economic challenges the country is facing, including rising inflation, a drop in the value of its currency and slow growth. For instance, it was noted that, following then Chancellor Kwarteng's [fiscal statement](#) to Parliament on 23 September 2022, the British pound fell to a record low against the United States dollar. In terms of inflation, the U.K. [Consumer Price Index](#) rose by 11.1% in the 12 months to October 2022, up from 10.1% in September 2022. In response, officials explained, the Bank of England raised interest rates, which in turn saw mortgage rates reach 4.5%, their highest level in years.

Trade

Andrew Smith and Colin Barker provided an overview of the services the Trade Commission offers to Canadian businesses in the U.K., noting that 90% of its clients were small and medium-sized enterprises. They explained that the U.K. is Canada's third largest destination for [merchandise exports](#) and its second largest services trading partner. Among other figures highlighted, they noted that bilateral trade in services was worth more than 14 billion dollars, while bilateral trade in goods amounted to approximately 28 billion dollars. The U.K.'s top exports to Canada are machinery and equipment, vehicles and scientific instruments, while Canada's top exports to the U.K.

are crude, metal and minerals and wood. Mr. Smith and Mr. Barker also explained that the U.K. is Canada's largest European agri-food market, listing wheat, pulses, fish and maple syrup as key exports.

Delegates also heard that the U.K. is Canada's second most important science, technology and innovation partner after the United States. Officials explained that the two countries worked closely in these fields, mentioning such examples as the [Canada-Inuit Nunangat-United Kingdom Arctic Research Programme](#) and cooperation in artificial intelligence and quantum technologies.

Following this general overview, the discussion turned to trade agreements. According to the U.K. government, the country has [over 70 trade agreements](#) in place as an independent trading nation. The U.K. House of Commons Library notes that the majority of these are "continuity" or "rollover" agreements.¹ In terms of "new" agreements, Canadian officials highlighted the [UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement](#) (not in force as of 30 November 2022), the [UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement](#) (not in force as of 30 November 2022) and the [UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement](#), which entered into force on 14 June 2022.² The U.K. is currently negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with Canada, India, and the Gulf Cooperation Council, among others. It was also noted that Canada is the only country that currently has a free trade agreement with all G7 nations.

Negotiations for a Canada-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement are underway and the officials informed delegates that they are expected to be concluded by April 2024. Currently, trade between Canada and the U.K. is governed by the Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement, which replicates the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) on a bilateral basis, including 98% tariff-free trade between the two countries. The Canada-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement, it was explained, aims to go further than CETA, for example with regard to inclusivity, environmental standards and digital provisions. While negotiations are proceeding well, hormone-treated beef was given as an example of a potential irritant. Officials were clear that there is no safety issue with Canadian hormone-treated beef.

Pursuing the discussion, Mr. Blois pointed out that supply management would also be a challenging issue. Officials responded that an FTA would not result in more U.K. access to the Canadian dairy market, but noted that, should the U.K. accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), it would have access to the CPTPP dairy quota, which may resolve the matter from the U.K. perspective.

Foreign policy

The war in Ukraine was a focal point of the discussion on foreign policy. Xochi Bryan noted that, as of August 2022, there were a total of 206,000 [applications](#) received under the U.K. government's various Ukraine visa schemes, most of which were under the

¹ Dominic Webb, "[UK-Australia free trade agreement](#)", United Kingdom (U.K.) House of Commons Library, 8 November 2022

² Dominic Webb, "[Progress on UK free trade agreement negotiations](#)", U.K. House of Commons Library, 2 December 2022

Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme. On the subject of immigration more broadly, she noted that the U.K. was turning to Canada for advice on its points-based immigration system. Still on the topic of immigration, Senator Bovey emphasized the importance of both countries continuing to welcome international students and of strengthening Canadian Studies programmes in foreign universities. Official highlighted the Centre of Canadian Studies at Queen's University Belfast and noted that immigration was a less contentious issue in the U.K. than it had been previously.

Next, delegates discussed the important role of cultural diplomacy as a pillar of foreign policy. As an example of cultural diplomacy, Celeste Kinsey highlighted the photography exhibition displayed at the Canada Gallery in Canada House - [Scotiabank Photography Award - 2010-2022 - A Retrospective of Canada's foremost photography prize](#). In turn, Mr. Smith and Mr. Barker underscored the work the Trade Commission does to promote Canada's cultural industries in the U.K.

Moving the conversation to defence and security, Brigadier General Parsons described the war in Ukraine as a "consuming focus." He underscored the many areas of cooperation between Canada and the U.K., including their work in NATO, the Five Eyes and [operation UNIFIER](#). Since operation UNIFIER began in 2015, the Canadian Armed Forces have trained over 34,00 Ukrainian military and security personnel. Brigadier General Parsons also highlighted the cooperation between the two countries in preparing commemorative events for veterans.

Brexit and Northern Ireland

As noted previously, at the time of the delegation's visit to the U.K., Northern Ireland did not have a functioning Assembly. The Good Friday Agreement provides for a power-sharing agreement between Nationalists and Unionists. A First Minister and a Deputy First Minister are nominated to lead the multi-party Executive Committee of Ministers. The largest party of the largest designation (Nationalist or Unionist) nominates the First Minister while the largest party of the second-largest designation nominates the Deputy First Minister. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister hold the office jointly; should one resign from this office, the other must also do so.

The Northern Ireland Assembly collapsed in February 2022 when then First Minister Paul Givan (Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)) resigned in [protest](#) over the Northern Ireland Protocol. In the elections that followed, Sinn Féin won the highest number of seats, allowing it to nominate a First Minister. However, the DUP has stalled the election of an Assembly Speaker and is refusing to nominate [DUP ministers](#) to form the cross-party Executive Committee of Ministers until its concerns with the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland (the Protocol) are addressed. This has left Northern Ireland with a caretaker government and no operating Assembly.

Canada House officials recognized the difficulty of the situation, but also suggested that progress on the Protocol may be made over the coming months. They also noted that trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. was largely functioning well. In response to a question from Mr. Maloney regarding the inclusion of language in support of the Good Friday Agreement in FTAs concluded with the U.K., officials responded that

the U.K.-Australia FTA contained “some language” to that effect. In response to a Parliamentary Question on the issue, the U.K. government said:

The [U.K.-Australia] FTA also takes into account the effects of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland by allowing the UK to take measures under the Protocol designed to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and to protect the peace process.³

Frozen pensions

The United Kingdom (U.K.) state pension is paid to U.K. pensioners irrespective of where they live. However, the pension entitlement is not increased annually – uprated – unless the U.K. pensioner lives in the U.K. or a country with which the U.K. has a reciprocal social security agreement that covers uprating. The reciprocal social security agreement between Canada and the U.K. does not provide for uprating, meaning that British pensioners resident in Canada have their U.K. state pension “frozen at the level it was at when they first left the UK or first claimed their pension overseas.”⁴ Like many other Canadian parliamentarians, several members of RUUK regularly receive questions about frozen pensions from constituents and advocacy organizations. For the past three years, members of the Association have worked to keep this issue on the agenda. Delegates including Mr. Jeneroux and Senator Dean took the opportunity to raise the question of frozen pensions with officials at the briefing session, characterizing it as a question of fairness. While recognizing delegates’ concern, the officials were not optimistic about the prospect of progress being made, emphasizing that current economic conditions are having a negative impact on U.K. public finances.

1. Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Ralph Goodale

Following a tour of Canada House, which included a visit to the photography exhibition in the Canada Gallery, delegates met with His Excellency Mr. Ralph Goodale, Canada’s Ambassador to the U.K. In his opening remarks, Mr. Goodale underscored the two countries’ shared history, traditions and values. Echoing the remarks of the Canada House team, he emphasized that the U.K. was a strong democracy, noting that the current political context, which saw three prime ministers in two months, was evidence of democracy in action. In the wide-ranging conversation that followed, delegates discussed subjects including Canadian businesses in the U.K., military and security cooperation between Canada and the U.K., and democratic backsliding and disinformation.

2. Meeting with Chris Curtis, Head of Political Polling, Opinium

Next, the delegation met with Mr. Chris Curtis, Head of Political Polling, Opinium. According to its website, [Opinium](#) “was the most accurate polling agency in the 2019 general election and accurately predicted the results of the 2016 EU [European Union]

³ Dominic Webb, [UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement](#), United Kingdom (U.K.) House of Commons Library, 8 November 2022, p. 9.

⁴ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen British Pensions (APPG), [2020 Inquiry: All-Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen British Pensions](#), December 2020, p. 2.

referendum.” Mr. Curtis provided delegates an overview of findings from recent political polls and discussed factors influencing voter intention. He began by noting that delegates had arrived in the U.K. as the Labour party was enjoying a significant boost in polls following then Chancellor Kwarteng’s fiscal statement (discussed above). In terms of the British public’s views of their country’s two main political parties, he noted that Labour was seen as being “nice” and “good with public services” whereas the Conservative party was viewed as “competent and good with the economy.” He also expressed the view that the Conservative party was “good at adapting to where the country is” but that Labour policies were currently popular, including those related to the energy sector.

In terms of voting patterns, he contended that age was a more important predictor of voter preference than social class, explaining that those over 60 years of age were more likely to vote for the Conservative party while those aged under 40 were more likely to vote Labour.

In response to a question as to why many polling agencies – although not Opinium – had failed to accurately predict the outcome of the Brexit referendum, Mr. Curtis highlighted the impact of social desirability bias (people did not want to admit they would vote for Brexit) and problems with sampling, suggesting that too many graduates had been polled. He also stated that the mood in the country had changed, pointing out that prior to the referendum, many people thought that Brexit would not damage their personal financial situation. Continuing on this topic, Mr. Curtis said that recent polls suggest that 55% would now vote remain, a change that is influenced not only by evolving attitudes but by changing demographics, with some who voted leave having died and more young people being eligible to vote.

Following questions from Senator MacDonald, Mr. Curtis explained that Northern Ireland was traditionally difficult to poll, citing factors such as sample size and a reluctance among certain groups to speak to British pollsters

3. Meeting with Jess Sargeant – Constitution, Brexit and Devolution – Institute for Government

According to its website, the [Institute for Government](#) is a thinktank that is “working to make government more effective.” Jess Sargeant, a senior researcher working on devolution, provided delegates with an overview of the impact of Brexit in Northern Ireland in preparation for their meetings in Westminster and Belfast. She opened her remarks by emphasizing that the people of Northern Ireland have experienced peace for over 25 years.⁵

The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland was signed as part of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement “to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, to avoid a hard border and to protect the [Good Friday] Agreement.”⁶ Among other things, the Protocol created a de facto customs and regulatory border between Great Britain and

⁵ The Irish Republican Army called its first ceasefire on 31 August 1994

⁶ U.K., “[Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland](#),” Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.

Northern Ireland, sometimes referred to as the Irish Sea border. Ms. Sargeant explained to delegates that the Protocol is not yet fully implemented.

Noting that the Protocol is very contentious, Ms. Sargeant explained that some Brexit supporters object to it as it provides for Northern Ireland to continue following EU law in certain areas. She described unionist voters in Northern Ireland as feeling “sold out” over the Protocol and noted that the DUP wanted “nothing to do with it.”

Regarding the impact of the Protocol on trade, she explained that intra-U.K. supply chains were more negatively affected than “all of island” supply chains. She discussed the ongoing tension between the EU and the U.K. and explained that, dissatisfied with the Protocol, the U.K. government had tabled its Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which aims to amend the Protocol, including by unilaterally suspending parts of it.⁷ In response, she noted, the EU has launched [legal action](#) against the U.K.

Among other measures, the bill seeks to remove the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union in enforcing the Protocol. Ms. Sargeant explained that the EU was not willing to accept this proposal. The bill also proposes “a system of [red lanes and green lanes](#), allowing goods which travel from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and stay there to avoid checks, while goods going on to the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the EU are subject to full controls.” Although the EU is not willing to accept a renegotiation of the Protocol, or unilateral action on the part of the U.K., it is willing, Ms. Sargeant noted, to seek a solution, including by reducing the frequency of checks.

The U.K. maintains that, despite “preparing for unilateral action”, it would prefer reach an agreement with the EU. Ms Sargeant said the “stakes are high,” noting that the EU could suspend the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement if a deal is not reached. She also highlighted the risk of ongoing uncertainty and instability.

Delegates returned the conversation to the impasse in the Northern Irish Assembly. Ms. Seargant noted that the Northern Irish public service was “trying to keep the show on the road” but was limited in what it could do as it could not make policy decisions. In response to a question as to whether [direct rule](#) would be imposed if power sharing were not restored, she noted that it would be controversial and would likely attract [criticism](#) and raise questions about what role the Irish government should play.

A. Westminster – Tuesday, 25 October 2022

Having participated in the extensive briefing programme provided by Canada House, delegates then spent two days at Westminster meeting with U.K. parliamentarians. On the first day, they met with the Rt. Honourable Caroline Nokes, MP, the Rt. Honourable Nigel Evans, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and Minister David Duguid, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. They also participated in a working lunch, as well as group sessions on the cost-of-living crisis and foreign policy.

1. Meeting with the Rt Honourable Caroline Nokes, MP

⁷ U.K., [Northern Ireland Protocol Bill](#).

The Rt Honourable Caroline Nokes, MP, Chair of [Women and Equalities Select Committee](#), met with delegates to discuss women in parliament. Senator Bovey delivered opening remarks for the Canadian delegation, noting that the Senate had reached gender parity, with 45 men and 45 women senators.⁸ Women, she added, make up approximately 30% of women parliamentarians in the Canadian House of Commons.

Ms. Nokes noted that the percentage of women parliamentarians in the U.K. House of Commons was roughly similar (35%), but significantly lower in the House of Lords (29%). Ms. Nokes discussed some of the barriers facing women who wish to run for office, as well as those they encounter once in office. Among others, she highlighted cost, noting that she had stopped work to focus on running for office, a privilege she recognized was not open to all. She noted that some parties in the U.K. had had success in promoting women MPs through women all-women shortlists. Mr. Maloney noted that the Liberal Party of Canada had established the Judy LaMarsh Fund to encourage women candidates to stand for election by offsetting some of the costs of running for office.

Regarding barriers experienced once in office, Ms. Nokes highlighted the emotional toll that extended periods of separation from their children took on parents. She also noted that women sometimes experienced harassment and violence while in office and that it could be difficult for parties to deal with this adequately. This environment, she contended, resulted in some women opting not to stand for a second or subsequent term in office. Among other examples of violence faced by women parliamentarians in the U.K., she underscored the killing of Jo Cox and the intersectional abuse faced by Diane Abbott.

9

In discussing the impact of the pandemic on women parliamentarians, Ms. Nokes underscored the combined effect of school and childcare closures, as well as the inability to rely on grandparents or other family caregivers due to public health restrictions. Mr. Blois focussed on lessons that could be learned from the pandemic, contending that the hybrid model had facilitated caregiving and women's participation in debates.

2. Session on the Economy and the Cost of Living

As discussed above, inflation was high and economic growth slow at the time of the delegation's visit to the U.K. The "cost of living crisis", driven in part by high energy prices, dominated the U.K. news cycle and societal debate. Andrew Percy MP (Conservative) and Chris Elmore, MP (Labour) attended this session and offered their perspective on the U.K.'s economic situation.

Mr. Percy began by setting out some of the measures the Conservative government had introduced to mitigate rising energy costs, which had seen household energy bills rise by several hundred pounds a year. Measures included a [£400 energy bills discount](#) to support households and the [Energy Price Guarantee](#), which limits the amount suppliers can charge per unit of energy used. For his part, Mr. Elmore shared some initiatives introduced by the Welsh government, including [free hot meals](#) and a "[thank you payment](#)"

⁸ IPU Parliine, [Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments](#)

⁹ Diane Abbott, [I fought racism and misogyny to become an MP. The fight is getting harder](#), the Guardian, 17 February 2017; [Labour MP Jo Cox 'murdered for political cause'](#), BBC News, 14 November 2016.

for social care workers. U.K. parliamentarians also highlighted the growing reliance on food pantries and heating banks.

Mr. Lake provided opening remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation, focussing on energy security and climate change. Of note, delegates discussed the green energy transition and achieving net zero emissions. U.K. parliamentarians noted that the government is committed to nuclear energy in the long term and has made significant investments in renewable energy sources. Mr. Percy expressed the view that green energy was a less politicized topic in the U.K. than in Canada.

Mr. Lake then turned the conversation to government spending related to the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that Canada had spent a lot of money during the pandemic and was now returning to “fiscal normalcy.” The U.K. parliamentarians made similar observations, noting that the U.K. government had provided generous pandemic support measures, including [furlough payments](#) of up to 80%.

Delegates were struck by the similarity of the issues facing the two countries. They noted, for example, the challenge of balancing the short-term need to provide support during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis against the long-term need to ensure healthy public finances. They also noted the high-level of cross-party support in both countries for providing households with help during crises, as well as shared concern about long-term costs.

3. Working Lunch

Members attended an informal working lunch with parliamentarians including Tracey Crouch, MP (Conservative) and Lord Balfe (Conservative) The conversation began with a discussion of Arctic issues, with U.K. parliamentarians raising concerns about defence and climate change, among other issues. Senator Dean noted that Canada’s Arctic includes more than 70% of Canada’s coastline yet is home to only 0.3% of its population. He described the Arctic as a “key vulnerability” and underscored the important role played by Inuit and other indigenous communities in protecting the area through search and rescue as well as surveillance activities. In terms of climate change, it was noted that the Arctic is warming faster than the rest of the world, opening channels for mineral exploration and fishing. Parliamentarians from both countries also expressed concern about China’s self-identification as a “near Arctic state.”

The second main theme of the discussion was loneliness. Tracey Crouch, MP, Chair of the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing](#) shared information on the group’s work, including a 2017 [report](#) on the contribution the arts can make to health and wellbeing. She also discussed the [Jo Cox Loneliness Commission](#) and her role as the U.K.’s first Minister for Loneliness. She spoke of the importance of reducing the stigma around loneliness and, among other points, informed delegates that one in five family practitioner appointments in the U.K. related to loneliness and that the problem was particularly acute among young people aged 16-24.

4.Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Nigel Evans MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons

After lunch, delegates met with the Rt. Hon. Nigel Evans MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. Mr. Evans first served as deputy speaker between June 2010 and September 2013, before returning to the back benches. He was elected Deputy Speaker again in January 2020.

[Mr. Evans](#) was elected to the 1922 Committee (discussed above) in June 2014, remaining on the committee until he was re-elected as deputy speaker in 2020. In a candid meeting, Mr. Evans provided an overview of the 1922 Committee and recent Conservative Party leadership races. Other topics raised included Brexit and the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Session on United Kingdom and Canada Foreign Policy Ambitions

The final session of the day focussed on the foreign policy ambitions and shared security interests of Canada and the U.K. It was attended by Anthony Higginbotham MP (Conservative), James Gray MP (Conservative) and the Rt. Hon. The Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat). Senator Bovey, Senator Dean and Senator MacDonald gave opening remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation.

Mr. Gray opened the session on foreign policy with remarks on challenges relating to the Arctic region, a theme that had been discussed during a [virtual foreign policy session](#) with U.K. parliamentarians on 18 May 2021. Among other issues, parliamentarians discussed growing Russian and Chinese interest in the Arctic region, noting, for example, China's attempt to establish a "geo political footprint" in the area by opening a research station in Iceland. U.K. and Canadian parliamentarians agreed that the Arctic is a significant defence issue and that there needs to be a focus on governance.

In her remarks, Senator Bovey focused on the impact of increased activity in the Arctic on its ecosystem. She pointed out, for example, that drilling for oil has affected caribou herds in the Arctic and noted that salmon are moving further north due to climate change. She also underscored the ice knowledge of Inuit communities and warned of the impact of cruise ships on remote communities. For his part, Senator Dean discussed the military vulnerability of the Arctic and the need to develop defence infrastructure. He explained that Inuit communities were open to playing a role in defence activities in the Arctic. He also noted that climate change was providing access to fishing and minerals and creating competition for these resources.

Turning the conversation to the war in Ukraine, U.K. parliamentarians observed that, collectively, western countries should have been more alert to the threat posed by Russia following events such as Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, the poisoning of Ukraine's ex-president Viktor Yushchenko and the Salisbury poisonings in 2018. They also stressed the importance of continued European unity and the need to consider how to address Russia after the war. Continuing the conversation on Ukraine, Senator MacDonald congratulated the U.K. for its leadership and spoke of the importance of solidarity between allies and friends. Senator MacDonald also noted the Canadian Armed Forces were facing recruitment challenges and were currently struggling to fill more than 10,000 positions. He argued that a coherent strategy was needed to address this issue.

Other subjects addressed by delegates including Senator MacDonald, Mr. Jeneroux and Mr. Lake included international development, Taiwan and China's dominance over critical minerals.

6. Meeting with Minister David Duguid

After completing their meetings in Westminster, delegates went to Dover House, where they met with David Duguid, MP, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. The [Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland](#) "represents Scottish interests within government... [and]... advocates for the UK governments' policies in Scotland."

Mr. Blois led the discussion on behalf of the Canadian delegation. Topics addressed included Scottish independence, Brexit and the energy sector. Minister Duguid offered the view that Scotland has a stronger role on the world stage as part of the U.K. He also pointed out that being part of the U.K. gave the people of Scotland an annual public spending [union dividend](#) of almost £2000 (CAD\$3320).

Both Canada and the U.K. have fossil fuel sectors and the conversation on the green energy transition was fruitful. Like Canadian parliamentarians, Minister Duguid recognized that oil and gas operators put efforts into environmental measures and all agreed on the importance of working towards environmental targets.

B. Westminster – Wednesday, 26 October 2022

In their second day at Westminster, delegates attended meetings on Northern Ireland, trade and frozen pensions, as well as a working lunch and Prime Minister's Questions.

1. Session on Northern Ireland post-Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol

Through the session on Northern Ireland post-Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, delegates sought to understand the perspective of U.K. parliamentarians on the situation in Northern Ireland ahead of their mission to Belfast. The session was attended by Lord Jay of Ewelme (Crossbench, chair of the Lord's Sub-committee on the Northern Ireland Protocol) and the Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley MP (Conservative Party, former Northern Ireland Secretary of State). Mr. Maloney gave opening remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation, highlighting the strong ties of friendship between Canada and Ireland.

In discussing the historical context against which tensions surrounding the Protocol must be understood, U.K. parliamentarians explained that unionism "always feels under threat," a sentiment that has been exacerbated by Brexit. They reminded delegates that "the Troubles" had resulted in over 3,000 deaths, affecting all families in Northern Ireland. They also expressed the view that, for a variety of reasons, many U.K. parliamentarians today have very little knowledge of Northern Ireland.

As noted earlier, the Protocol seeks to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. Aside from any more fundamental concerns, U.K. parliamentarians noted, policing a hard border would be highly impractical as there are more [border crossings](#) on the Island of Ireland that there are between the EU and all countries to the east of it.

In terms of trade, it was pointed out that the Good Friday Agreement did not contemplate intra-island trade as both the U.K. and Ireland were members of the EU at the time it was signed. U.K. parliamentarians explained that Irish-U.K. trade was high and that the Irish market was very integrated. They noted, for example, that while [Baileys Irish Cream](#) is produced in Dublin, some of the milk used in the liqueur comes from farms in Northern Ireland.

The U.K. parliamentarians also noted that the Protocol enjoyed support among the business community and observed that, in a sense, Northern Ireland had the “best of both worlds,” having access to the Irish and European markets, as well as the British market.

Regarding the political impasse in the Northern Ireland Assembly, they noted that growing support for parties other than the DUP and Sinn Féin presented challenges for the system of power sharing between unionists and nationalists provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. Asked whether new elections in Northern Ireland would deliver different results, U.K. parliamentarians explained that, while the DUP may hope to gain extra seats, it also risked losing ground.

On the topic of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, U.K. parliamentarians observed that it served political purposes as well as its stated objectives. While stating that issues such as border control and the Court of Justice of the European Union were “difficult”, they were confident that progress could be made on issues such as data. There was also confidence in European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič as a pragmatic negotiator.

2. Meeting with the United Kingdom’s All Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen Pensions

Delegates next met with members of the U.K.’s All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Frozen Pensions. The session was well attended by parliamentarians of all political stripes from both the U.K. House of Commons and the House of Lords. Mr. Jeneroux gave opening remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation.

The session allowed delegates to exchange ideas on this important topic with their U.K. counterparts and to learn about the work their counterparts are doing. Delegates were heartened by their U.K. colleagues’ commitment to ensuring that this matter remain on the political agenda and moved by the stories they shared about frozen pensioners who were experiencing financial hardship.

As noted above, one of the objectives of the mission was to equip parliamentarians to advocate for and scrutinise matters relating to U.K.-Canada affairs in their respective parliamentary roles. This session provided parliamentarians from both countries with the opportunity to develop ideas to move this issue forward in their respective parliaments. Among other measures envisaged, parliamentarians from both sides of the Atlantic agreed on the importance of encouraging frozen pensioners, and their families, to continue raising the matter with their elected representatives. U.K. parliamentarians also encouraged their Canadian colleagues to urge those affected by the issue to register to vote in U.K. elections as overseas voters, if eligible to do so. Other ideas included authoring op-eds, working with veterans’ organizations, conducting further research into

the experiences of other countries and raising the issue at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

3. Prime Ministers Questions

Prime Minister Sunak took office on Tuesday, 25 October 2022. On Wednesday, 26 October 2022, following their meeting with the APPG on Frozen Pensions, delegates had the privilege of attending Prime Minister Sunak's first appearance at [Prime Minister's Questions](#).

4. Working lunch with Rt Honorable Dame Marie Miller MP and the Rt Honourable the Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Following Prime Minister's Question Time, delegates had a working lunch with the Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller, MP and the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Canada and the Honourable the Lord Foulkes of Cumnock.

During this session, delegates discussed topics ranging from cultural diplomacy to trade by way of international development. Senator Bovey began the discussion on cultural diplomacy speaking of the need for more cultural exchange between Canada and the U.K. Participants also discussed intellectual property provisions and cultural carve-outs in free trade agreements. Mr. Lake and Dame Miller discussed international development work, with Dame Miller underscoring the U.K.'s commitment to standing up for the right of every girl to 12 years of education.

In terms of trade, Dame Miller spoke of her desire to get in touch with Canadian businesses and to strengthen ties between the two countries. Mr. Blois, Mr. Jeneroux and Mr. Lake raised the importance of ensuring viable flight routes between Canadian and U.K. cities. Noting that trade on food was always contentious, delegates discussed the importance of striking a balance between ensuring domestic food capacity and remaining open to trade. Issues including welfare standards and supply management were also broached.

Lastly, Lord Foulkes spoke about the need to reform the House of Lords, which currently comprises approximately 800 members, some of whom do not participate actively in the work of the upper chamber. Lord Foulkes said that, along with some of his fellow peers, he had looked at other models, including the French model. He sought input from the Canadian senators on the delegation as to their experience of Senate reform in Canada.

5. Meeting with members of the United Kingdom House of Commons International Trade Select Committee

For their last session in Westminster, delegates met with members of the U.K.'s House of [International Trade Select Committee](#). U.K. parliamentarians informed delegates that leaving the EU had damaged the U.K. economy and that new trade deals with countries such as [New Zealand](#) and Australia did not fully mitigate the loss to the country's GDP. More specifically, they noted, the deal with New Zealand would add just 0.02% to the UK's GDP while the deal with Australia would add 0.08%.

Mr. Blois gave opening remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation, addressing topics including trading in a new security context, food security and the CPTTP. He said that western democracies are grappling with how to approach trade with autocracies, noting, for example, the importance of ensuring a responsible approach to critical minerals and climate targets. With regard to food security, he stressed the importance of balancing domestic capacity against ensuring openness to trade, underscoring that imports are part of food security. Giving the example of Nova Scotia apples exported to the U.K. from the 1860s to World War II, Mr. Blois emphasized the strong food trade connection between the two countries.

Delegates also discussed energy, noting that Canada struggled at times to get its energy product to market. It was also pointed out that Canada and the U.K. were among few non-dictator countries exporting oil and gas and that both were dedicated to clean oil.

C. Belfast - Thursday, 27 October 2022

As noted above, delegates arrived in Belfast at a pivotal moment. Under rules set out in the Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Act 2022, if devolution was not restored by 28 October 2022, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had to set a date for new elections.

On 25 October 2022, the outgoing Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly announced that he had [received notice](#) from the required number of members to recall the Northern Ireland Assembly to debate the cost-of-living crisis. Before debating the issue, the Northern Ireland Assembly had first to elect a Speaker and Deputy Speakers and appoint a First Minister and Deputy First Minister, as well as all other Executive Ministers. The Assembly had previously been recalled three times since the election in May 2022, but each time had failed to elect a Speaker. The outcome of the fourth recall was no different.

Delegates were clear that the objective for this part of their mission was to listen, learn and extend a hand of friendship.

1. Tour of Parliament Buildings

On their arrival at Stormont, delegates were given a tour of the Northern Ireland Assembly buildings, during which they were greeted by the outgoing Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr. Alex Maskey.

2. Roundtable discussion with Members of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly

The meeting with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) was scheduled to begin one hour before the sitting of the Northern Ireland Assembly was due to start. Present at the meeting were Declan Kearney, MLA (Sinn Féin), Emma Little Pengelly, MLA (Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)), Andrew Muir, MLA (Alliance Party) and the Rt Honourable Sir Jefferey M Donaldson, MP and leader of the DUP. The delegation is deeply grateful to Mr. Donaldson and the MLAs for having given up their time at this important moment in their parliamentary history. The MLAs and Mr. Donaldson discussed various issues including the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland, the view that Northern

Ireland's institutions should be reformed to ensure that one party cannot prevent the Assembly from sitting, the cost-of-living crisis, the rights of minority communities in Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement. Delegates clearly understood the intensity of the situation.

3. Recall of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Delegates were honoured to sit in the gallery during the recall of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

4. Lunch with the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly

After the morning's programme was complete, delegates attended a lunch with Speaker Maskey. Following opening remarks from Speaker Maskey and Mr. Maloney, delegates enjoyed a frank discussion covering such topics as party dynamics in Northern Ireland, the impact of Brexit and the prospect of an election being called.

5. Meeting with the Joint Secretariat of the North South Ministerial Council

After lunch, delegates moved from the Parliament buildings to Stormont Castle to meet with representatives from the Joint Secretariat of the North South Ministerial Council. The [North South Ministerial Council](#) (NSMC) was established under the Good Friday Agreement "to develop consultation, cooperation and action within the island of Ireland." The NSMC is supported in its work by the Joint Secretariat, which comprises staff drawn from both the Irish and the Northern Irish civil services.

The NSMC meets in various formats, including in Plenary format, which involves the Northern Ireland Executive led by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and the Irish Government led by the Taoiseach (prime minister). The NSMC has met in Plenary format on 30 July 2021.

Richard Hill (NSMC, Joint Secretary (North)), Sean McAteer (NSMC, Deputy Joint Secretary (North)) and Mark Hanniffy (NSMC, Joint Secretary (South)) provided an overview of the NSMC's work, describing their objective as trying to make life better for people on both sides of the border. They explained that the NSMC cannot currently meet as any agenda must be approved by the relevant officials and ministers from both jurisdictions. Further, the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 provides that the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly must perform certain duties for meetings to proceed. When the Assembly is operational, they explained, there would normally be 25-30 meetings of the NSMC per year. They added that there is always representation from both unionists and nationalists to ensure community balance in meetings.

The officials explained that there are six areas of [policy cooperation](#) where "common policies and approaches are agreed in the [NSMC] but implemented separately in each jurisdiction." These are: health, education, agriculture, environment, transport and tourism. As an example of recent cooperation in the field of health, the officials highlighted the new cancer facilities at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry~Londonderry, which allow residents in both Northern Ireland and Ireland to access chemotherapy and radiotherapy

services closer to home. Another example given was the Middletonw Centre for Autism, in Middletown, County Armagh.

There are also six [North South Implementation Bodies](#), which operate on an all-island basis, including a Trade and Business Development Body (InterTradeIreland).

Following the presentation, officials invited questions from delegates. Mr. Lake sought further information on the work of the Centre for Autism, while others explored tourism and agriculture. In response to a question on potential irritants, officials drew delegates' attention to provisions of the Nationalities and Borders Act 2022, which would potentially require EU citizens who are not Irish to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation before entering the U.K., including when crossing the border into Northern Ireland. The matter is still under [discussion](#), and was referenced in a recent communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

6. Tour of Peace Walls

Delegates finished their programme with a visit to Belfast's peace walls and political murals. A local guide who had grown up in Belfast during the Troubles explained the area's history to the group.

Respectfully submitted,

James Maloney, M.P.

Chair

Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral visit to the United Kingdom
DESTINATION	London, England and Belfast, Northern Ireland
DATES	From October 24 to 27, 2022
DELEGATION	
	Hon. Patricia Bovey
SENATE	Hon. Tony Dean
	Hon. Michael MacDonald

HOUSE OF
COMMONS

Kody Blois
Matt Jeneroux
Mike Lake
James Maloney

STAFF

Freddy Bobo Mukinayi
Nicole Sweeney

TRANSPORTATION	\$ 18,764.68
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 15,626.49
PER DIEMS	\$ 7,231.47
HOSPITALITY	\$ 856.19
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 384.11
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 250.30
TOTAL	\$ 43,113.24