

Canada – United Kingdom
Inter-Parliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada – Royaume-Uni

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Bilateral Visit to Northern Ireland and
Westminster, London, United Kingdom**

Canada–United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

March 16 – 24, 2012

Report

A delegation of the Canada-UK Inter-Parliamentary Association visited Northern Ireland and Westminster, London, United Kingdom from March 16-24, 2012.

The delegation was led by the Ed Holder, M.P. and included the following members of the delegation: Hon. Nancy Ruth, Senator, Hon. Jim Munson, Senator, Mr. James Rajotte, M.P., Mr. Mike Sullivan, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association.

The objectives of the visit were as such:

- 1) Overview of the parliamentary system, including the devolution of powers within the United Kingdom, especially as it concerns Northern Ireland;
- 2) Bilateral relations, including the economic and trade relationship with Canada;
- 3) Historical overview of the Northern Ireland troubles and subsequent peace process.

While at Westminster, the delegation's discussions concerned the following subjects of focus:

- 1) The Canada-European Trade Partnership and the European Debt Crisis;
- 2) The Canada-United Kingdom Partnership; working together to secure sustainable growth in the global economy;
- 3) The promotion of the strategic partnership between Canada and the United Kingdom.

Overview of the Parliamentary System, including the devolution of powers within the United Kingdom:

The delegation was warmly greeted by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Honourable William Hay, and at the outset would like to extend its thanks for a program that was tremendously interesting and informative.

One of the purposes of devolution in the United Kingdom has been to enhance the responsiveness and efficiency of governance, based on the premise that devolved government can do a better job of meeting its people's needs. In 1999, governing power in specified areas was formally devolved across the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland, this devolution took the form of the Northern Ireland Executive and Departments (the executive) and the Northern Ireland Assembly (the legislature). Simply stated, the Assembly holds the Executive to account for its policy and legislative proposals, as well as economic, budgetary and other financial decisions. Hence, the Northern Ireland Assembly has full legislative and executive authority for all matters that are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government Departments and are known

as transferred matters. Excepted matters remain the responsibility of the Westminster Parliament. Reserved matters are also dealt with by Westminster unless it is decided by the Secretary of State that some of these should be devolved to the Assembly. Excepted and reserved matters are defined in the Schedules to the Northern Ireland Act.

The Northern Ireland Assembly itself was established as a result of the Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998. Otherwise known as the Good Friday Agreement, this Agreement was the outcome of a long process of talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish Governments. The Assembly itself was first elected on June 25, 1998. The Agreement was the outcome of a long process of talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish Governments and represented a major step towards ending the 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland. Some of the terms of the agreement include: making changes in the administration of Northern Ireland, particularly with respect to British involvement, thereby modifying the Constitution accordingly, fostering better cooperation between Protestant and Catholic parties, establishing a number of commissions on restoring and maintaining order in Northern Ireland, and implementing the gradual disarmament of paramilitary groups. A referendum was held on May 22, 1998, and votes in both Ireland and Northern Ireland gave their support to the Agreement.

The delegation had the opportunity to meet Senator George Mitchell, the architect of the Good Friday Accord, while at the National Assembly in Stormont. Senator Mitchell has taken a leading role in negotiations for peace in Northern Ireland, being specifically appointed United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland (1995 – 2001) by President Clinton.

The Northern Ireland Assembly consists of 108 members, six from each of the 18 Westminster constituencies. Its role is to scrutinize and make decisions on the issues dealt with by Government Departments and to consider and put forth legislation. Its members are elected by means of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system of proportional representation. Northern Ireland also sends 18 members of Parliament to Westminster, 5 of which represent the Sinn Fein Party who presently do not take their seats in Parliament.

A First Minister and a Deputy First Minister are elected to lead the Executive Committee of Members. They must stand for election jointly and to be elected must have support from across the spectrum of the parallel consent formula, meaning that a majority of both the members designated as Nationalists as well as those considered Unionists and a majority of the whole Assembly must vote in favour. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister head the Executive Committee of Ministers and acting jointly, work to confirm the total number of Ministers in the Executive. The parties elected to the Assembly select Ministerial portfolios and select Ministers in proportion to their party strength. Each party has a designated nomination officer and the d'Hondt procedure is used for the appointment of Ministers. The d'Hondt system is a highest averages method for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation. The method described is named after Belgian mathematician Victor D'Hondt, which slightly favours

large parties and coalitions over scattered small parties. There are two forms, closed list and open list, which differ in whether each party selects the order of election of the party's candidates, or if the voter's choice can affect the order.

Statutory Departmental Committees are established to advise and assist each Minister in the formulation of policy for their respective departments and to scrutinize the work of that department. Committee Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons are also elected using the d'Hondt method. It was expressed to the delegation that such a system has led to a stable, devolved government, operating wholly on consensus. Eventually, a greater opposition dynamic in the Assembly would hope to be achieved.

Bilateral Relations, including the economic and trade relationship with Canada:

Relations between Northern Ireland and Canada are close, based on shared democratic values and cultural affinities and family ties. Approximately 3.8 million Canadians, or 14% of the population, have some Irish ancestry.

Canada has been a long supporter of the Northern Ireland peace process, and individual Canadians have played key roles in the process, including General John de Chastelain, a former Chief of Staff in the Department of National Defence. A number of companies have established a strong industrial presence in Northern Ireland, most particularly, Bombardier, and the delegation had the opportunity to visit its offices and factories while in Belfast. Bombardier is the biggest investor in Northern Ireland, investing over £1.8 billion since 1984. Bombardier Aerospace Belfast is the largest manufacturing employer in Northern Ireland, employing over 5,000 skilled workers specializing in major aircraft structures such as fuselages, wings, engine nacelles and flight control surfaces in metal and advanced composites. The company produces a sizeable proportion of the country's total manufacturing exports. The delegation was hosted by Russell McFadden, Vice President Operations, Wing Manufacturing and Assembly Facility and Composites, as well as Alec McRitchie, Director, Communications and Public Affairs, Europe.

Bombardier has expended a significant amount of over £520 million in Belfast alone, the largest ever community investment in Northern Ireland. Such investments include contributions to schools and universities and as well economic and community development of Belfast, including re-building after the troubles. It employs over 800 individuals at full production and involves another 2,000 in the overall supply chain.

While in Belfast, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the Crumlin Road Gaol. Dating back to 1845 and having closed its doors as a working prison in 1996, it then underwent extensive renovations, allowing for its re-opening as a visitor attraction and conference centre. The Gaol, one of Belfast's most historic landmark buildings was a notorious place where 17 executions took place, the last execution being performed in 1961. The renovations are tremendously symbolic for the city of Belfast, as it works diligently to create welcoming spaces in places once reflective of its troubled past.

The delegation also had the opportunity to travel to the Borough of Ballymena and to witness the laudable project of the preparation of a mural for the 2012 Olympic and

Paralympic Games in London, United Kingdom. The mural, entitled, **Hands around the World**, is reflective of the view of the world as seen by Ballymena's youth and a collaborative effort with the Northern Ireland Creative Peace Mural Society. The mural, inspired by the Olympic values of friendship and respect formed part of the exhibit in the Halls of Westminster as part of the **Arts in Parliament Program** in celebration of the Olympic Games. Delegation members very much appreciated the opportunity to include their handprints on the mural.

The delegation also had the opportunity to visit the Northern Ireland Science Park, and was greeted by its Director of Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, Mervyn Watley. The location of the Science Park is the very site of the Titanic Shipyards and the delegation had the opportunity to visit the historic Pump-House and tour the Titanic's Dock. Belfast's motto regarding the Titanic is such: **She was fine when she left here.**

The Science Park has become the new hub of the region's knowledge economy. Spanning an area of 180 acres, it houses such tenants as Dow Chemical, Citigroup, Hewlett Packard, and Fidessa among others. It provides a focus for knowledge-based entrepreneurs, investors and philanthropists, business professionals and global corporations. Not only does it provide office space solutions and corporate style facilities, it also serves as an independent, non-profit organization fostering entrepreneurship by accelerating the growth of promising technologies and early stage programmes. Moreover, it operates as a "halo business angels" programme, connecting high-worth investors with promising, early stage companies seeking investment.

Historic overview of the Troubles and subsequent peace process:

The Troubles refers to approximately three decades of violence between elements of Northern Ireland's nationalist community (Irish and/or Roman Catholic) and its unionist community (British and/or Protestant.)The conflict was the result of discrimination against the Nationalist/Catholic minority by the Unionist/Protestant majority and the question of Northern Ireland's status within the United Kingdom. The violence was characterized by the armed campaigns of Irish republican and Ulster Loyalist paramilitary groups. The British Government's view was that its forces were neutral in the conflict, trying to uphold law and order in Northern Ireland and the right of the people of Northern Ireland to democratic self-determination. Irish republicans, however, regarded the state forces as forces of occupation, noting collusion between state forces and the loyalist paramilitaries.

An historic peace agreement, the result of two years of negotiation, was signed at Stormont on April 10, 1998. Known as the Good Friday Accord, the agreement, signed by both the United Kingdom and the Irish governments, was a major step in ending the 30 years of conflict. In this post-conflict phase, the country is attempting to build a shared future while working towards a spirit of reconciliation and healing within a segregated society. Education plays a crucial role in this endeavor, but the challenges remain great. In Northern Ireland today, some neighborhoods are still separated by walls.

Visit to Westminster:

Following a most successful visit to Northern Ireland, the delegation held two days of meetings at Westminster, focussing on trade and investment issues, including the Comprehensive and Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Prior to meetings at Westminster, the delegation held a meeting with Scott Proudfoot, Minister Counsellor (Political and Public Diplomacy) at the Canadian High Commission and other Canadians residing in Britain. Canadians play a most important role in driving the British economy, and their efforts are significantly expressed throughout all sectors of the economy including banking, trade and investment, education and health care.

The Canada-European Trade Partnership (CETA) and the European Debt Crisis

Canada and the United Kingdom have a profound and positive relationship. The Canada –**United Kingdom Joint Declaration** - signed in Ottawa by Prime Ministers Harper and Cameron on September 22, 2011 - outlined the enduring strength of that relationship and the ongoing cooperation between the two countries.

Canada and the UK share a sovereign, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and are among the oldest traditions of parliamentary democracy in the world. The relationship between our two countries continues a long tradition of strategic partnership, forged in peace and war, through two world wars and in nearly every major conflict for more than a century.

Canada has been in negotiation with the European Union since May 2009 on the establishment of a Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The United Kingdom has been a strong supporter of CETA and has played a key role in supporting a successful outcome to trade talks with Canada. As stated in the **Canada-United Kingdom Joint Declaration, we will seek an ambitious and mutually successful outcome to the negotiation of the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). This will result in economic growth for both countries, by stimulating competition, increasing trade, expanding market access and promoting joint investment and innovation.** This perspective was certainly re-affirmed by Lord Harrison, Chair of the European Union Sub-Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs and International Trade Membership. He did however state that certain United Kingdom members would be happier with a more relaxed trade arrangement with Europe, citing the fact that the European Union financial crisis has done much to intensify reservations concerning participation than ever before.

The Canada-United Kingdom Partnership; working together to secure sustainable growth in the global economy

The issue of attracting a greater number of small and medium enterprises into the international marketplace was the central focus of the meeting with Lord Green of Hurstpeirpoint, Minister of State for Trade and Investment. Canada is Britain's second largest trading partner after the United States, and it was suggested that a means to further increase that partnership is by the promotion of SME's, especially in the areas of transport, energy, broadband, water and waste treatment.

Moreover, within the context of the G20, Canada and Britain look to improve global economic conditions so that enhanced international trade and investment can thrive.

The promotion of the strategic partnership between Canada and the United Kingdom.

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet with members of the Canada-United Kingdom Colloquium while at Westminster. This initiative is an annual event that aims to increase knowledge and educate the public on the advantages to be drawn from a close and dynamic relationship between the two countries. The event takes place alternately in each country, bringing together by invitation British and Canadian parliamentarians, public officials, academics, representatives from the private sector, graduate students and others. One principal outcome of these meetings is to publish research while seeking to promote the already strong existing relationship between the two countries. Subjects target a broad range of issues of mutual concern, from the global economic crisis, knowledge, skills and innovation for a global economy, the Arctic and northern dimensions of world issues, and international engagement in fragile states. It was suggested that the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association might be a natural point of contact for the Colloquium and its work in broadening the awareness of its activities and publications within the parliamentary perspective.

In closing, the delegation would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Honourable William Hay as well as CPA –UK for hosting and arranging a tremendously interesting program. Also, we very much appreciate the kind assistance and support extended by the Canadian High Commission in London as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in providing a briefing prior to our departure.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Holder, M.P.

Chair

Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-UK Inter-Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to the United Kingdom
DESTINATION	Northern Ireland and Westminster, London
DATES	March 16-24, 2012
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Nancy Ruth, Senator, Hon. Jim Munson, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ed Holder, M.P., Mr. James Rajotte, M.P., Mr. Mike Sullivan, M.P.
STAFF	Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	31,160.25
ACCOMMODATION	7,504.05
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	3,964.18
OFFICIAL GIFTS	1,411.10
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	31.50
TOTAL	<u>44,071.08</u>