

Canada - United States
Inter-Parliamentary Group
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire
Canada - États-Unis
Section canadienne

**Report of the
Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the
Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary group**

to the

***Southern Governors' Association 2006 Annual Meeting
New Orleans, Louisiana
July 15-17, 2006***

From 15-17 July 2006, members of the Canadian Section of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group attended the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Southern Governors' Association in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Report

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Improving emergency preparedness

Col. Perry "Jeff" Smith, Jr., Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

- strategies and lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 include:
 - the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness was reorganized as an independent agency
 - staffing levels were increased
 - the full engagement of all state agencies was sought
 - a reconfigured method of operations was implemented
 - a regional concept was adopted
 - enhanced communications capability and connectivity were pursued
- parishes have the primary responsibility to try to solve an emergency themselves
- there are more than 1,000 Emergency Management Assistance Compacts in Louisiana
- in preparing for an emergency, it is important to pre-identify anticipated resource requirements, to develop a tracking system for out-of-state resources, and to establish procedures and guidelines for reimbursements

Leon Shaifer, National Emergency Management Association

- the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is a national, interstate mutual aid compact that facilitates the efficient and effective sharing of resources among member states during times of emergencies or disasters affecting a member state; its objective is to become the cornerstone of the nation's mutual aid system
- the EMAC is a resource provider rather than a first responder
- the Southern Governors' Association started the development of the mutual aid compact following Hurricane Andrew in 1992; in 1993, 17 Governors signed the

Southern Region Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which was expanded to the EMAC in 1995 and endorsed by the National Governors Association and the Federal Emergency Management Association the following year; at this time, all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have joined the compact

- the EMAC has been activated on more than 60 occasions, including: fires; floods; Y2K; the space shuttle explosion; the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks; and hurricanes
- the EMAC:
 - maximizes the use of available resources
 - coordinates resource deployments
 - expedites and streamlines the delivery of assistance among member states
 - protects state sovereignty
 - provides management and oversight for interstate trade
- the EMAC does not:
 - replace federal support
 - alter a state's operational direction and control
 - endorse or support self-deployment or self-dispatch
 - broker resources from municipality to municipality
- a Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation must be officially declared for a member state to activate EMAC articles and request assistance
- although an EMAC state must make every effort to assist, it may withhold resources in order to provide reasonable protection of its own state
- a state providing EMAC assistance is responsible for worker's compensation and death benefits when death or injury occurs to their personnel deployed to another EMAC state; compensation must be in the same manner and on the same terms as if the death or injury occurred within the home state from which the personnel were deployed
- a state giving aid will be reimbursed by the state receiving aid for any loss, damage or expense incurred in providing assistance, although the state providing assistance can opt to waive all or a portion of the cost

- regarding evacuation, certain guidelines apply:
 - EMAC states that must evacuate civilians to another state as a result of a catastrophic disaster must develop plans with contiguous states
 - plans must address orderly evacuation and interstate reception
 - repatriation of evacuees to their home state is the responsibility of the home state

Vice Admiral Harvey Johnson, Federal Emergency Management Agency

- the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) brings two perspectives to the table: internal and external
- the FEMA needs core competencies in order to complement what is done within the states, recognizing the importance of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of various levels of government and other partners
- the FEMA operates on the basis of four key values:
 - a more effective federal response
 - improved public service
 - renewed public confidence
 - more effective strategic partnerships and coordination with state and local governments
- the FEMA provides support in six key areas:
 - disaster logistics
 - emergency management
 - emergency communications
 - delivery of services to the public
 - disaster communications
 - operational planning
- the FEMA stresses the importance of a personal preparedness and evacuation plan
- it is important to remember that those not affected by a disaster may still be affected by the persons displaced by the disaster

- the integrity of the transportation system is a critical element in the ability to evacuate people safely and efficiently
- a system for validating the identity and credentials of such individuals as health care professionals and law enforcement officers is important, and self-deployment and self-dispatching are sometimes not effective

Ernest Blackwelder, Business Executives for National Security

- during catastrophic events, the role for business might include:
 - commerce
 - business continuity
 - continuity of the community
- businesses can come together with governments to fill the gaps that neither can fill alone; these partnerships should be created before a catastrophe occurs
- while governments can provide emergency management, law enforcement, public health and National Guard services, businesses can provide information, assets, volunteers and expertise

Morgan O'Brien, Cyren Call Communications

- broadband is the answer for improving emergency communications
- emergency communications can be enhance by improving day-to-day communications
- at present, fundamental structural problems exist
- interoperable communications are the number one issue; if you cannot communicate, you cannot coordinate

Using communications campaigns to promote high school graduation

James Shelton, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- the United States must increase the number of students graduating from high school and must change both what they know and what they are able to do when they graduate
- there are a number of key questions that must be answered, including:
 - are students going to school?
 - if they go to school, are students getting a high-quality education?

- if students are attending high school, are they taking the courses they need to prepare them for college or technical school?
- it is estimated that one-third of high school students will not graduate with their class
- although graduation rates in the southern United States are fairly low, they are improving more quickly than in the remainder of the United States
- although students indicate that they understand the importance of graduating from high school, they often say that school failed to motivate them
- strategic state-based efforts directed toward vulnerable groups are needed
- high school should be more rigorous, since high challenge combined with high support results in high achievement
- relationships among students, among teachers and between students and teachers must be improved; as well, greater parental involvement, smaller schools, individual graduation plans and “early warning systems” are needed

Chad Boettcher, MTV: Music Television

- there are a variety of ways to get the message across to American youth, including:
 - on television
 - on-line
 - on the radio
 - using new media
- in order to get the message across to American youth, the following principles should be considered:
 - respect them
 - empower them through their voice
 - at times, use humour or irreverence
 - focus on experiences to which they can relate
 - be inspirational
 - go where they are
 - create easy calls-to-action

- connect the dots

E-Medical records: Developing a roadmap for adoption and implementation

Secretary Michael Leavitt, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- electronic, interoperable health records and secure sharing of health information among service providers are needed
- 16% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product is spent on health care, and this percentage is expected to rise
- the U.S. health care system is price-blind and quality-silent, and the incentives are all wrong
- consistent with the principle of transparency, consumers deserve to:
 - know the quality of their care
 - know the cost of their care
 - have a financial incentive to care
- consumer information changes behaviour
- programs should not be created just for emergencies; programs should be put in place for daily use, and they will be available in emergency situations
- wage costs are growing at one-third the rate of health care costs
- health care costs are impeding competitiveness

Roxane Townsend, Department of Health and Hospitals, Louisiana

- the United States can create a healthy future through the power of health information technology
- state and regional collaboration are needed in order to develop health information systems
- the privacy and security of patient information must be ensured
- the challenges for health information systems are legal and political, rather than technological
- with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, 1.2 million people were separated from their medical records

Mark Frisse, Vanderbilt University Center for Better Health

- technology is an enabler for change rather than an end in itself
- choices must be made for the long term
- privacy and confidentiality concerns must be addressed
- in moving forward, the “really important” must be separated from the “merely interesting”
- an inventory of efforts and best practices should be created
- a coherent intra-state approach is needed in order to benefit from multi-state efforts

John Lumpkin, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

- as a strong public health system is pursued, there are two key issues:
 - parties must work together across state lines
 - public health agencies must be brought into the discussion
- harmonization is key; parties must move beyond “turf,” and coordinate and cooperate across cities and states
- public health agencies are invaluable in their ability to see the broader picture
- health information technology is critical

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Jerahmiel Grafstein, Senator
Co-Chair, Canadian Section
Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary
Group

Rob Merrifield, M.P.
Co-Chair, Canadian Section
Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary
Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada United-States Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	Southern Governors' Association 2006 Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	New Orleans, LA
DATES	July 15-17, 2006
SENATORS	
MEMBERS	Mr. Gord Brown, M.P. Ms. Monique Guay, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. June Dewetering, Advisor Mr. Serge Pelletier, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 4,157.67
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,692.29
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 950.28
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 958.04
TOTAL	\$ 8,758.28