



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Report of the visit by the Scottish Parliament delegation to New York, USA; Ottawa and Québec, Canada

Thursday 13 April – Saturday 22 April 2023



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP and Finlay Carson MSP)

Introduction

1. This is the report of the visit by the Scottish Parliament delegation to New York Ottawa and Québec 13–22 April 2023. The delegation comprised:

- Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Presiding Officer
- Finlay Carson MSP, Convener of Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
- Collette Stevenson MSP, Member of Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, and Criminal Justice Committee.

2. The delegation took part in the tartan day celebrations in New York 13-15 April 2023. The National Tartan Day New York Committee was formed in 2002 to organise the Parade and co-ordinate the associated activities. Its members include the St Andrew's Society of State of New York, the New York Caledonian Club, the American-Scottish Foundation, and the Carnegie Hall. This year's Grand Marshall was Gail Porter. The delegation walked behind the Scottish Parliament banner near the front of the Parade.

3. 16 - 22 April 2023 the delegation visited the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa and the National Assembly of Québec. The Scottish Parliament has maintained strong friendships and links with Canadian parliaments, both federal and provincial, since 1999. This visit allowed the Scottish Parliament to further strengthen these links and find further opportunities to share knowledge and experiences of parliamentary issues.

4. The total cost of the visit was £18,250.65, which covered the cost of travel, accommodation and expenses for three parliamentarians and two accompanying members of staff.

The delegation wishes to thank all those who facilitated the meetings and engagements across this visit, and for the time and information they so willingly shared.

Recommendations

5. The visit provided an opportunity to observe question times in different legislatures, which provided comparison that is valuable in considering how procedures in the Scottish Parliament might develop.

6. Pass on the details of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

7. Share with Security colleagues the signage that the Parliament of Canada used to make members of the public aware of increased surveillance in the public gallery.

8. The visit also allowed international relations staff to learn about aspects of how other parliaments manage inward visits, and to observe some aspects that may be

helpful to consider for visits to the Scottish Parliament. These will be considered as part of the International Relations Office team's ongoing review of its visit protocols.

Purpose

9. As with all visits, the purpose of the visit contributes to fulfilling the Scottish Parliament's [International Strategy](#), which identifies activities the Parliament considers as strategically important. In addition to the issues highlighted above, the delegation also participated in discussions across the visit relating to current policy and political issues in Scotland.

10. The purpose of the visit to New York was to attend various 'Scotland Week' events connected to the 25th Anniversary of Tartan Day. This is the first time the Parliament has attended this parliamentary session. Other visits and meetings in the New York area, relating to the work of the Scottish Parliamentary committees, were also undertaken by the delegation.

11. The purpose of the visit to Canada was to develop the Scottish Parliament's relationship with the Parliament of Canada and the National Assembly of Québec, to continue to share learning and best practice and to examine parliamentary processes, structures and facilities.

12. The full range of issues discussed during the visit can be found in Annex A.

Programme

13. The visit consisted of three distinct locations: New York, Ottawa and Québec. The New York leg of the trip promoted the reputation of the Parliament and enabled members to undertake a number of networking opportunities. Individual meetings were also set up to allow members to pursue specific committee interests.

14. The Ottawa and Québec legs of the programme focused on parliamentary business.

Thursday 13 April 2022

St Andrew's Society of the State of New York

The delegation attended a reception hosted by the St Andrew's Society of the State of New York. The Presiding Officer made a short speech highlighting the many bonds, historical and current, between the people of the United States and Scotland.

American Scottish Supper Club



(L-R Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone and Collette Stevenson MSP)

15. The delegation attended the American Scottish Foundation Supper Club, meeting with members of the Foundation and others who have a link to Scotland. This event included a showcase of the work of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Friday 14 April

BakkaFrost



(L-R Finlay Carson MSP and Donald Platkin)

16. Finlay Carson MSP met with Donald Platkin of BakkaFrost and visited its New Jersey processing site. He was able to see how Scottish Salmon was processed and taken to market.

17. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss resilience and sustainability within the food supply chain. The focus was on how Scottish Salmon is harvested and then exported to markets in North America.

Department of Correction



(L-R Commissioner Molina and Collette Stevenson MSP)

18. Collette Stevenson MSP met with Commissioner Louis A Molina, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction. She was given a tour of Robert N. Davoren Complex at Rikers Island. This facility houses both adolescent males (aged 16-17) and adult males. The current capacity of Robert N. Davoren Complex is 2,238 inmates.

19. The visit gave Collette Stevenson the opportunity to understand aspects of the prison regime and to discuss the wide range of programmes and services provided by the Department of Corrections, including counselling services, therapies, education and training (including training on anger management; parenting and relationship classes; horticulture therapy; animal care; financial literacy; vocational training and job readiness).

Tartan Day Observance



(Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone)

20. The delegation attended the Tartan Day Observance at Bryant Park. The event, hosted by the American-Scottish Foundation, celebrated, through music and readings from the Senate Resolution and Presidential Decree, the 25th Anniversary of the National Tartan Day on April 6th. The Presiding Officer delivered a speech.

UN Women



(L-R Mark Brough, Collette Stevenson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone, Shoko Ishikawa, Julie Ballington, Rafael Martinez Gil and Marta Val)

21. The Presiding Officer and Collette Stevenson MP visited the offices of UN Women and met with Shoko Ishikawa, Deputy Director, Policy, Programme & Intergovernmental Division, and Julie Ballington, Policy Advisor on Leadership and Governance Policy, Programme & Intergovernmental Division.

22. UN Women is the [United Nations](#) organisation dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality. The discussion centred on the Scottish Parliament's recent work on a gender sensitive audit of the Parliament, and the structures, processes and practices that could help consolidate and continue to develop equal representation and participation in parliaments. The UN Women officials shared their experience of working with other parliaments across the world and of developing toolkits to help assess and support progress.

The American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals and the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

23. Finlay Carson MSP met with Michelle Villagomez, Senior Legislative Director from the ASPCA and Alexandria Silver, Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare and Patrick Kwan, Senior Advisor, NYC Mayor's Office Community Affairs Unit.

24. Finlay Carson MSP was given a tour of the adoption centre and hospital at the ASPCA and was informed about the work of the centre and how animal welfare enforcement issues are handled by the between the ASPCA, the Mayor's Office and the NY Police Department.

25. Finlay Carson, as Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, will consider how this experience can help inform the Committee's future work on animal welfare issues.

Scottish Government Alumni Event

26. The delegation attended a Scottish Government Alumni event, hosted by Emma Wade-Smith, His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for North America. The evening brought together alumni of Scottish Universities and members of the GlobalScot community and aimed to highlight Scotland's reputation as a centre for talent, innovation and sustainable growth.

New York Canadian Club Ceilidh

27. The delegation attended a Ceilidh hosted by the New York Canadian Club to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Tartan Week.

Saturday 15 April 2023

Kirkin' of the Tartan



(Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone)

28. The delegation attended the St Andrew's Society of the State of New York Kirkin' of the Tartan service at the Brick Presbyterian Church. The non-denominational service is a traditional prelude to the Tartan Day Parade. The Presiding Officer gave a reading at the service, and the delegation met with Society members and others attending.

Tartan Day Parade



(L-R Jennie Chinembiri, Finlay Carson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone, Finlay Carson MSP and Mark Brough)

29. The [Tartan Day Parade](#) is the high point of Scotland Week, which this year celebrated its 25th anniversary. In 1998 the US Senate declared April 6 as National Tartan Day to recognise the contributions made by Scottish-Americans to the United States. Since the first Parade, it has grown to include hundreds of pipers, thousands of marchers and many more thousands cheering from the sidelines. The Parliament is a long-time participant. This year's Parade was judged by the event organisers as the biggest to date, with 3,600 people taking part.

Monday 17 April

Parliament of Canada - Ottawa

30. The delegation visited the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa for two days to meet with counterparts, observe aspects of business and parliamentary life and to share experiences.

Meeting with Patrick McDonnell, Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Commons

31. The Sergeant-At-Arms took the delegation on a tour of the floor of the House of Commons. He showed the delegation how a temporary chamber had been constructed to allow the House to continue sitting during a major renovation project. He explained the House's approach to welcoming the public attending chamber business, and how any disruption to proceedings is dealt with.

Meeting with Chris d'Entremont, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole House of Commons



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Chris d'Entremont MP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP and Finlay Carson MSP)

32. The discussion focused on the role of the Speaker in how business is chaired in the chamber, how Members are selected to speak, and how question time is managed (including the types of questions that can be asked). The Deputy Speaker explained the approach of the House to the use of both English and French, and also the approach to remote participation and hybrid in person/online proceedings.

Meeting with the Clerk of the House of Commons, Eric Janse and Deputy Clerk of Procedure, Jeffrey Leblanc



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Jeffrey Leblanc, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Eric Janse, and Finlay Carson MSP)

33. The Clerk gave an overview of the House of Commons Administration, including how it is managed through the Board of Internal Economy, and the procedural support available to the Speaker. The Clerk explained the major renovation project that the House is undergoing, which is being overseen by a cross-party sub-committee of the Board.

Meeting with Steven MacKinnon MP, Chief Government Whip and Member of the Board of Internal Economy



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Steven MacKinnon MP and Finlay Carson MSP)

34. The delegation met Steve McKinnon MP, the Government Chief Whip and Member of the Board of Internal Economy. He provided an overview of how parliamentary business is organised and managed in the Canadian House of Commons, and explained his role in relation to management of parliamentary facilities and resources through the Board.

Meeting with Hon Bardish Chagger, Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs of the House of Commons



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Hon Bardish Chagger MP and Finlay Carson MSP)

35. Hon Bardish Chagger MP explained to the delegation how procedural reform in the House of Commons is developed and managed. She was the first woman to hold the position of House Leader, and also discussed work on equal representation and participation in Parliament, including on committees.

Tuesday 18 April

Meeting with John Gregory Peters the Usher of the Black Rod in the Senate of Canada



(L-R Finlay Carson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, John Gregory Peters and Collette Stevenson MSP)

36. The delegation met with the Black Rod and were given a tour of the senate and an explanation of the history of the role of Black Rod, which is responsible for the security in the Senate.

Meeting with Gérald Lafrenière, Interim Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments and Chief Legislative Services Officer



(L-R John Gregory Peters, Collette Stevenson MSP Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Gérald Lafrenière and Finlay Carson MSP)

37. The interim Clerk provided an overview of the security procedures followed at the Senate.

Meeting with Honourable Patti LaBoucane-Benson Senator, Government Liaison in the Senate



(L-R Collette Stevenson MSP, Patti LaBoucane-Benson Senator, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, and Finlay Carson MSP)

38. Senator LaBoucane explained the process for being appointed a senator in Canada. She explained her work and, in particular, focussed on equal representation issues and how indigenous people's representation and perspectives are considered in the Parliament of Canada.

Meeting with Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons



(L-R, Finlay Carson MSP, Hon Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Hon Anthony Rota MP and Collette Stevenson MSP)

39. The delegation was welcomed by Hon Anthony Rota MP, Speaker, who explained his role in the House of Commons, focussing on management of parliamentary business and how the Speaker team is organised and operates. Speaker Rota explained in detail how question times operate, including in relation to the content of questions and time allowed for questions and responses. He also explained how the Members' statements session is used to raise brief specific constituency matters without debate or motions.

Meeting with Kody Blois, Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food



(L-R, Collette Stevenson MSP, Kody Blois MP, Hon Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP and Finlay Carson MSP)

40. The delegation heard from Kody Blois MP on current issues of interest to his Committee, including how issues relating to aquaculture have been scrutinised by the Committee.

Meeting with the leader of Bloc Québécois, Yves-François Blanchet and Vice-Chair for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Stéphan Bergeron



(L-R, Stéphan Bergeron MP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Yves-François Blanchet MP, Collette Stevenson MSP and Finlay Carson MSP)

41. Discussions focused on parliamentary procedures, session times, committee and chamber sittings and the members statement session.

Wednesday 19 April

National Assembly of Québec

42. The delegation visited the National Assembly of Québec for two days to observe parliamentary business, meet parliamentary leaders, and discuss a range of issues to the work of the Assembly, and the facilities and resources provided to support that work.

Meeting with Hon President Natalie Roy



(FR: L-R Brigitte Garceau MNA, Collette Stevenson MSP, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone, President Nathalie Roy MNA, Vice President Chantal Soucy MNA, BR: Joël Arseneau MNA, Siegfried Peters Secretary General, Lucie Lecours MNA, Marie-Belle Gendron MNA and Finlay Carson MSP)

43. President Roy welcomed the delegation to the National Assembly of Québec. The President expressed her joy that they are both the second female speakers for both parliaments and know they will have a lot to learn from one another. She also gave an overview of the National Assembly.

Working Group – Political and Parliamentary News



(L-R Finlay Carson MSP, Lucie Lecours MNA, Geneviève Hébert MNA, Presiding Officer Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, President Nathalie Roy MNA, Collette Stevenson MSP, and Marie-Belle Gendron MNA)

44. The discussion focused on the current political and parliamentary news over the last few months. President Roy highlighted the most recent election, the gender split, how the election campaign was marked by violence, the government's strategy to counter sexual violence, and the law adopted in December 2022 to abolish the oath to the King.

45. The Presiding Officer gave an update on developments in the Scottish Parliament, highlighting the most recent election, the challenges of being elected to a new session during Covid, the co-operation agreement between the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Green Party, and legislative and political developments.

Working Session 2 – Women and Politics

46. The discussion focused on the circle of women, a forum set up by the National Assembly of Québec. This is a network for brainstorming, to have ideas discussed in a non-partisan way. They have working groups to discuss issues, have conferences, workshops, training sessions etc. They had a workshop recently about speaking in public, launched a video in relation to domestic violence and launched a mentoring programme to MNAs to be paired with former MNAs. The Presiding Officer spoke about the Gender Sensitive Audit that had been carried out at the Scottish Parliament highlighting a number of its recommendations.

47. A presentation was given on a research topic by the library: Women in Politics in Québec subject guide, A new tool for research on women's involvement in the world of politics. The goal of this tool was to bring together the research that already existed on this subject. The experience of first nation's women was looked at in this project as they are often overlooked.

Meetings with opposition parties

48. The delegation met with the leadership of each of the opposition parties. These discussions centred on the role of different groups in the Assembly, the organisation of business, the role of committees, and some of the similarities and differences between parliamentary scrutiny in the Assembly and the Scottish Parliament.

Thursday 20 April

Working Session 3 and 4 – National Assembly Citizen's House and Living Environment

Citizen Engagement and Visitors Services

49. The purpose of this session was to understand how each legislature engaged with the public, ensure a work life balance for Members and officials and to share experience of work on diversity and inclusion.

50. The Assembly uses both its welcome hall and outside space to offer activities to the public in order to engage them with their work. The visitors team offers guided tours, welcome visitors and manage the boutique. The mission of the team is to warmly welcome each person and to accompany them from the beginning to the end of their visit, no matter how long it is. The new pavilion has allowed them to offer visitors a better experience, and is accessible for all.

Family and Work Life Balance

51. The National Assembly shared how it had conducted a survey about family work life balance. The results of this survey were shared along with initiatives that have been put in place as a result of the survey, such as takeaway meals from the

cafeteria, increased security, the provision of a nursing room, and a drop-in day care pilot project which will open in Autumn 2023.

Diversity and Inclusion

52. The National Assembly shared details of its action plan on diversity and inclusion and its action plan for persons with disabilities. There is a committee on diversity and inclusion and a diversity and inclusion officer. It is mandatory for MNAs to attend a conference on diversity and inclusion along with training on Indigenous realities.

Working Session 5 – Management of Parliamentary Business, President

Nathalie Roy, Lucie Lecours and Claude Reid

53. Discussion focused on the management of business. There are three questions periods for 45 minutes on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in the Assembly. The Presiding Officer then set out what the working week looks like in The Scottish Parliament.

54. The Assembly does not have the equivalent of the Parliamentary Bureau but a board that brings together the house leaders of the political parties to decide the business of the Assembly.

Feedback

55. “First and foremost, it was an honour and privilege to represent the Scottish Parliament during our North American trip. I was delighted to be able to visit to Rikers Island detention centre and meet some of the young offenders housed in the department of corrections. I was very grateful to all the staff and officers who made me feel very welcome and it was very informative.” Collette Stevenson MSP

56. “The trip to North America gave MSPs the opportunity to engage with stakeholders. I had a fantastic meeting with BakkaFrost the salmon company that has business interests in Scotland. I also had the opportunity to discuss animal welfare issues with the New York equivalent of the SSPCA and see how they streamline the process of ensuring animals taken into the compound is done as quickly as possible. The method that they do this is by ensuring that they know exactly how the legislation, the court service and the police service works.

57. Our trip to Canada gave the Parliamentarians the opportunity to see how different Parliaments work, of particular interest was security and how the public access the debating chamber, given the number of interruptions that the Scottish Parliament chamber had seen prior to our visit. It also gave us the opportunity to see how question time works, it is good to see how we are now seeing some of these ideas in practice in Scotland. There is the possibility of seeing more change including the opportunity for Members to speak to some of their motions which congratulate constituents.” Finlay Carson MSP

Conclusion

58. The delegation was delighted to take part in all of the Scotland Week activities in New York, representing the Parliament and promoting Scotland at a variety of different events.

59. The visit to both Ottawa and Québec allowed the delegation to understand the workings of both legislatures, build networks and share the workings of the Scottish Parliament. There are a number of areas that this learning will be applied to on their return to Scotland.

Annex A: Programme

Thursday 13 April 2023

Travel Edinburgh to New York Newark

Attend National Tartan Day St Andrews Cocktail Reception, NY Racquet and Tennis Club, NYC

Attend American Scottish Foundation Scottish Supper Club, The University Club of New York

Friday 14 April 2019 (New York)

Finlay Carson MSP Visit to BakkaFrost Office, Wayne, New Jersey,

Collette Stevenson MSP, Meetings and visit to Dept of Corrections, Rikers Island

PO Media Interview with Phyllis Stephens, Edinburgh Reporter

Attend Tartan Day Observance, Bryant Park

PO and Collette Stevenson MSP – meeting with UN Women

Finlay Carson MSP – Meeting with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Finlay Carson MSP – Meeting with Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

Attend Scottish Government Reception – Scottish Alumni on the Global Stage British Consulate

Attend Ceilidh hosted by New York Canadian Club

Saturday 15 April (New York)

Attend St Andrews Kirkin' of the Tartan Service, Brick Presbyterian Church, Park Avenue

Attend Pre-parade brunch

Take part in Tartan Day Parade

Observe Parade from VIP area with Grand Marshal

Attend American Scottish Foundation Post-Parade Reception

Attend dinner hosted by National Tartan Day, New York Committee

Sunday 16 April 2023

Travel from New York Newark to Ottawa

Monday 17 April 2023 (Ottawa)

Guided Tour of the House of Commons floor and Meeting with Sergeant-at-Arms, Assistant Commissioner Pat McDonell in Chamber

Meeting with Chris d'Entremont MP, the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole of the House of Commons

Meeting with the Clerk of the House of Commons (interim), Eric Janse, and Deputy Clerk Procedure, Jeffrey Leblanc

Meeting with Steven MacKinnon MP, Member of the Board of Internal Economy and Government chief whip

Lunch hosted by Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

Attendance at the House of Commons Question Period and Recognition

Meeting with Hon. Bardish Chagger MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Media interview with Marie Woolfe, The Globe and Mail

Tuesday 18 April 2023 (Ottawa)

Guided Tour of the Senate - Meeting with Clerk of the Senate, Gérald Lafrenière, and the Usher of the Black Rod, J. Greg Peters, in the Senate Chamber

Meeting with Senator Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Senate Government Liaison (Government Whip) and Leader on Indigenous issues

Meeting with the Honourable Anthony Rota MP, Speaker of the House of Commons with official photos

Reception and Lunch hosted by the Honourable Anthony Rota MP, Speaker of the House of Commons

Meeting with the Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Kody Blois MP

Meeting with the leader of Bloc Québécois, Yves-François Blanchet MP and Vice-Chair for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Stéphan Bergeron MP

Travel from Ottawa to Québec

Wednesday 19 April 2023 (Québec)

Welcome at the National Assembly by Nathalie Roy MNA, President

Official Photographs

Meeting with Nathalie Roy MNA, President

Introduction of delegation during Routine Proceedings, National Assembly

Guided Tour of the National Assembly

Meeting with the Leader of the Third Opposition Group, Mr. Paul St-Pierre Plamondon MNA

Lunch hosted by the Member for Les Plaines, Mrs. Lucie Lecours MNA, Chair of the Committee on Citizen Relations

Opening of discussion sessions

Addresses by:

Nathalie Roy MNA, President of the National Assembly

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Presiding Officer

Working session 1: Political and Parliamentary News

Joël Arseneau MNA, Lucie Lecours MNA Chair of the Committee on Citizen Relations, Siegfried Peters Secretary General, President Nathalie Roy MNA and Chantal Soucy MNA First Vice President,

Working session 2: Women and Politics

President Nathalie Roy Chair MNA, Siegfried Peters Secretary General, First Vice President Chantal Soucy MNA

Meeting with the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Marc Tanguay MNA, Mrs. Michelle Setlakwe MNA, Member for Mont-Royal–Outremont and Official Opposition Critic for International Relations

Meeting with the Leader of the second opposition, Mr. Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois MNA

Dinner hosted by the President of the National Assembly, Nathalie Roy MNA

Thursday 20 April 2023 (Québec)

Working session 3: The National Assembly: Citizens' House and Living Environment

Meeting with Officials

Working session 4: **Visit of the services of the National Assembly**
Meeting with Officials

Lunch hosted by the National Assembly

Working session 5: **Management of parliamentary business**
Lucie Lecours MNA, Chair of the Committee on Citizen Relations, Siegfried Peters,
Secretary General, and President Nathalie Roy MNA

Visit to the Musée de la civilisation, Québec. Guided tour of the exhibition: This is
Our Story, First Nations and Inuit in the 21st Century.

Walking guided tour of Old Québec

Dinner hosted by the Vice-president of the National Assembly, Mrs. Chantal Soucy
MNA

Friday 21 – Saturday 22 April 2023

Travel from Québec City to Edinburgh, via New York Newark