



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

International Relations: Parliamentary travel

By Correspondence

Reference: SPCB (2025) Paper 8

Executive summary

1. Section 2, paragraph 59, of the Code of Conduct requires Members to register and “provide details of visits outside the United Kingdom in certain circumstances.” However, some overseas visits are excluded from this requirement to register. In accordance with paragraphs 62 and 64 of Section 2 of the Code of Conduct, the travel and other costs of a visit which are wholly met by the SPCB, or are approved by the SPCB prior to the visit, is exempt from registration as an overseas visit in the Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament.
2. As the overseas visit outlined in this paper is being taken forward by the Parliament’s International Relations Office, the SPCB is invited to confirm the travel as parliamentary in nature, thus exempting inclusion in Members’ Register of Interests. Upon approval, the International Relations Office will inform Members that registration of this travel in the Register of Interests is not required.

Issues and options

North America (Tartan Week)

3. The annual Scottish Parliament outward visit to North America commenced in 2000 and, since then, successive delegations have met with key policymakers and parliamentarians in both Canada and the US.
4. The visit aligns with the aims of the Parliament’s International Strategy i.e. to promote the Parliament, its practices and processes as an open, accessible and participative legislature amongst other parliaments and international organisations; to provide opportunities for the continuous

professional development of MSPs and officials through meetings and discussions with elected Members and officials in other legislatures and organisations; and to showcase and develop the policy, procedural and corporate knowledge of MSPs and officials through international collaboration and engagement.

5. Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, accompanied by the Deputy Convener of the Economy and Fair Work Committee, Michelle Thomson MSP, and the Deputy Convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, Alexander Stewart MSP, will visit the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. A detailed programme is under development however discussions will centre around parliamentary procedure and policy developments in the Legislative Assembly. Meetings will also be pursued relevant to individual MSPs' committee roles.
6. Prior to the visit to Edmonton, Alberta, the delegation will be in New York to represent the Scottish Parliament at various engagements, including the Tartan Day Parade and associated events. The delegation will be supported in both Edmonton and New York by the Private Secretary to the Deputy Presiding Officer and an International Relations Officer.
7. This will be the above-named Members' first involvement in the North America Tartan Week visit programme.

Governance

8. The SPCB will recall that, within the International Strategy which it agreed in September 2021, there is a requirement for the International Relations Office to outline to the SPCB why the visit is in person (as opposed to virtual) and the travel options and environmental impact considered by the delegation.
9. In person attendance in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta allows MSPs to participate in a number of face-to-face bilateral meetings with the Speaker and other parliamentarians. Due to the time difference with Alberta and other logistical factors, this would not be practical online. Participation in the Tartan Week Parade and other associated events in New York would also not be possible online.
10. The only viable travel option between Scotland and North America is by air. The individual CO₂e footprint for flying (return) economy class from Edinburgh to New York is 1,551 kg. Business class travel for the above transatlantic flights would be 4,498 kg.
11. On this occasion, economy class flights will be used for all travel: transatlantic flights and cross-continental flights (New York to Edmonton, return). Public transport will also be used, where

appropriate. Centrally located hotels will be booked to minimise reliance on cars.

12. The estimated cost for this year's parliamentary visit to Edmonton, Alberta and New York is £24,000 which covers travel, accommodation, meals and appropriate incidental expenses for 3 Members and 2 accompanying officials. This cost is being met out of the International Relations Office's budget, which has already been approved as part of the overall SPCB budget.

Publication Scheme

13. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to consider the above travel and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, approve the details of the travel provided.
15. The IRO will then notify the Members concerned they do not need to register this travel.

International Relations Office

February 2025