



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

International Relations: Parliamentary travel By Correspondence

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 22

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider and approve forthcoming overseas parliamentary travel. 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, are exempt from registration as an overseas visit in the Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Issues and options

North America (Tartan Week)

2. 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.
3. 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.

4. The Presiding Officer, accompanied by the Deputy Convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, Michael Marra MSP; Member of the Economy and Fair Work Committee, Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee and, until recently, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Evelyn Tweed MSP; and Member of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, Maurice Golden MSP, will visit the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (LABC). A detailed programme is under development however discussions will centre around parliamentary procedure and policy developments in the LABC as part of the Speaker's recent reviews of *'the parliamentary culture in the LABC in the areas of work environment, corporate policies practices and procedures'*. Meetings will also be pursued relevant to individual MSPs' committee roles.
5. The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia was one of the nine legislatures cited in the research commissioned by the Consultative Steering Group which developed the blueprint for how the Scottish Parliament works. A visit to the Assembly during the 25th Anniversary year of the Scottish Parliament therefore provides an opportunity to compare progress and developments in both Parliaments since 1999. This will be the first official, cross-party delegation to visit to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.
6. Prior to the visit to Victoria, British Columbia 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 Victoria and New York by the Principal Private Secretary to the Presiding Officer and an International Relations Officer.
7. This will be the above-named Members' first involvement in the Presiding Officer's North America visit programme.

Resource implications

8. Costs for this visit will be met from the existing IRO budget. The estimated cost for this year's parliamentary visit to Victoria, British Columbia and New York is £22,500 which covers travel, accommodation, meals and appropriate incidental expenses for 4 Members and 2 accompanying officials.

Governance

9. 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.

10. In person attendance in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia 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 British Columbia 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.
11. 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 / Toronto (the most efficient transatlantic return from Victoria, B.C.) is 1,564 kg. Business class travel for the above transatlantic flights would be 4,392 kg. Return economy class transatlantic flights for all travellers are an estimated £5,700 while business class flights are an estimated £23,000.
12. On this occasion, economy class flights will be used for all travel: transatlantic flights and cross-continental flights (New York to Seattle and Victoria to Toronto). Additionally, a ferry will be taken in lieu of an additional flight (Seattle to Victoria). Public transport will also be used for airport transfers, where appropriate. Centrally located hotels will be booked to minimise reliance on cars.

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 and the associated costs provided.
15. The IRO will then notify the Members concerned they do not need to register this travel.

International Relations Office
March 2024