International Legislators' Forum

Celebrating 20 Years of Transcending Borders

September 22, October 15, and November 19

Virtual Forum via Zoom

Manitoba | Minnesota | North Dakota | Saskatchewan | South Dakota

International Legislators' Forum

Celebrating 20 Years of Transcending Borders

In 2020, a year that will be marked in history as one of life upended by pandemic, legislators from central Canada and the north-central United States held fast to a to two-decades-long tradition of connecting with each other. Participants in the International Legislators' Forum (ILF) found new ways to transcend state and provincial borders, as well as an indefinitely closed international border, to meet, share, and learn from experts and from one another.

Legislators representing Manitoba, Minnesota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, and South Dakota gathered virtually with presenters, dignitaries, and sponsors. The year 2020 was the ILF's 20th anniversary, and the first year to add representation from the province of Saskatchewan. The 2020 ILF was originally planned as an in-person summer event in Bismarck, ND, but the ILF Steering Committee and Consensus Council (CC) staff deftly reworked the event into a series of virtual sessions. ILF delegates gathered for three evening Zoom sessions on September 22, October 15, and November 19 to discuss the economic, public health, and governance impacts of the pandemic on lives of people in our region.

About the International Legislators' Forum

The ILF is a nonpartisan, consensus-oriented convening of legislators from five jurisdictions to meet, learn, share information, understand problems, build relationships, and develop collaborative approaches and solutions on a wide variety of issues relevant to and affecting their jurisdictions. The ILF is convened and facilitated by a neutral third party, Consensus Council (agree.org).

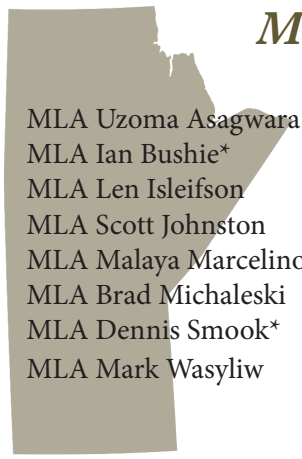
The ILF grew out of the International Flood Mitigation Initiative, a series of consultations between Manitoba, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota following the 1997 Red River Basin flood. Over the past 20 years, the ILF has addressed a wide variety of issues across our shared environment including food we grow, to how we care for one another, to the passages of people and goods across borders. The ILF delegates' efforts have resulted in agreements that directly and indirectly impact the policies and people living in our jurisdictions in the center of the North American continent. Highlights and previous years' convenings can be viewed in publications found at **agree.org/legislators-forum.**

Amid the shift to a virtual forum, sponsors stepped up to provide support for the ILF 20th Anniversary convening. We thank our sponsors for their essential support!

2020 Delegates

For the 20 years of its existence, the ILF has sought balance between political parties as well as legislative bodies (e.g., House and Senate) in delegate representation. Each jurisdiction's two major political parties are invited to be equally represented.

Manitoba

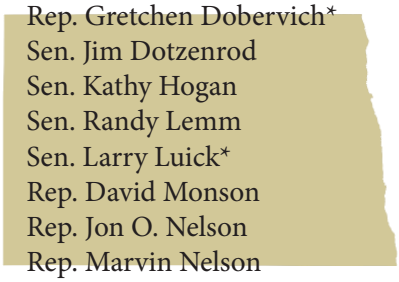


MLA Uzoma Asagwara	NDP	Union Station
MLA Ian Bushie*	NDP	Keewatinook
MLA Len Isleifson	PC	Brandon East
MLA Scott Johnston	PC	Assiniboia
MLA Malaya Marcelino	NDP	Notre Dame
MLA Brad Michaleski	PC	Dauphin
MLA Dennis Smook*	PC	La Verendrye
MLA Mark Wasyliw	NDP	Fort Garry

Minnesota

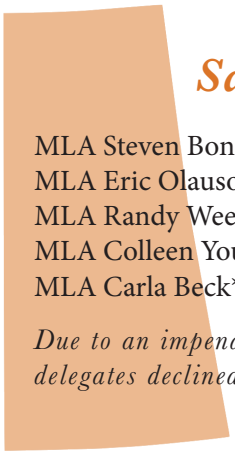
Rep. Patty Acomb	DFL	District 44B
Rep. Jeff Backer	R	District 12A
Rep. Dan Fabian*	R	District 01A
Sen. Mark Johnson	R	District 01
Rep. Julie Sandstede	DFL	District 06A
Sen. Erik Simonson	DFL	District 07
Sen. David Tomassoni*	I	District 06
Sen. Bill Weber	R	District 22

North Dakota



Rep. Gretchen Dobervich*	DNPL	District 11
Sen. Jim Dotzenrod	DNPL	District 26
Sen. Kathy Hogan	DNPL	District 21
Sen. Randy Lemm	R	District 20
Sen. Larry Luick*	R	District 25
Rep. David Monson	R	District 10
Rep. Jon O. Nelson	R	District 14
Rep. Marvin Nelson	D	District 9

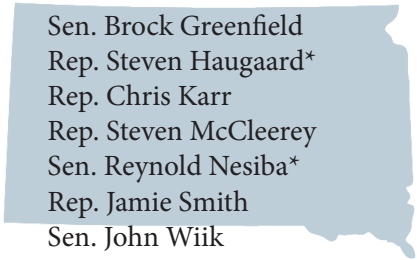
Saskatchewan



MLA Steven Bonk*	SP	Moosomin
MLA Eric Olauson	SP	Saskatoon University
MLA Randy Weekes	SP	Biggar-Sask Valley
MLA Colleen Young	SP	Lloydminster
MLA Carla Beck*	NDP	Regina Lakeview

Due to an impending election, Saskatchewan NDP delegates declined to attend ILF 2020.

Saskatchewan



Sen. Red Dawn Foster	D	District 27
Sen. Brock Greenfield	R	District 02
Rep. Steven Haugaard*	R	District 10
Rep. Chris Karr	R	District 11
Rep. Steven McCleerey	D	District 01
Sen. Reynold Nesiba*	D	District 15
Rep. Jamie Smith	D	District 15
Sen. John Wiik	R	District 04

** ILF Steering Committee Member*

Key

D	Democratic Party
DNPL	Democratic–Nonpartisan League Party
DFL	Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party
I	Independent
NDP	New Democratic Party
PC	Progressive Conservative Party
R	Republican Party
SP	Saskatchewan Party

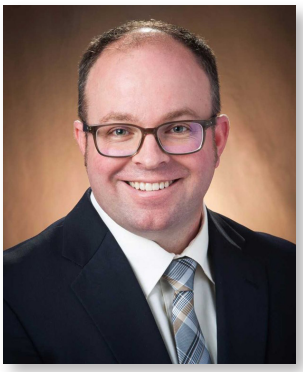
Session 1: Economic Impact of COVID-19

Tuesday, September 22 | 2 to 4 p.m. CT

Virtual Forum via Zoom

Consensus Council Senior Program Director Scott Fry and Executive Director Ann Crews Melton welcomed participants to the 20th Annual International Legislators' Forum. Sen. Larry Luick and Rep. Gretchen Dobervitch, Steering Committee hosts from North Dakota, welcomed delegates to the virtual event and new way of conducting the forum.

Presenters



Jeremy Jackson
Director, Center for the
Study of Public Choice
and Private Enterprise
North Dakota State University

Joe Mahon
Regional Outreach Director
Federal Reserve Bank
of Minneapolis

Philip Houde
Chief Executive Officer
Economic Development Office
Province of Manitoba

A Forecast of the Effects of COVID-19 on the Economy

Jeremy Jackson, Director
Center for the Study of Public Choice and Private Enterprise
North Dakota State University

Jeremy Jackson's presentation, "A Forecast of the Effects of COVID-19 on the Economy," was delivered from the basement of his home while he was in quarantine status. He focused on the economic impacts of COVID-19 on the state of North Dakota. The forecast used trends in historical data to predict future trends, noting that while all forecasts are wrong, they do provide useful information to help plan for the future. The model used takes into account oil and agricultural commodity prices in the situations of low oil prices and high national unemployment. Data used came from the Federal Reserve Bank. While the presentation's forecasts were specific to ND, the presenter noted that the states of Minnesota and South Dakota have followed similar patterns in the past.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated business closures adversely affected ND's economy. The forecast, over varying estimated levels of unemployment and prices of oil, predicts a recovery of labor force, wages/salaries, gross state product, and tax collections in 2021. Jackson noted that ND's economy historically runs countercyclical to the national economy, and that trend is included in the modeling.

Delegates asked how the global economy might fare and in turn impact the region's economy. As all have experienced, industries are not running efficiently or effectively due to pandemic illness and mitigation efforts, and systems that produce and distribute goods have been disrupted and are not reliable. Delegates wondered why there did not seem to be more impact on tax collection based on the model.

Manitoba's Response to the Pandemic

Philip Houde, Chief Executive Officer
Economic Development Office
Province of Manitoba

Philip Houde shared greetings from Premier Brian Pallister. Houde's presentation, "Manitoba's Response to the Pandemic," highlighted challenges to business and government response. The Manitoba Department of Economic Development and Training is assisting in the recovery, communicating regularly to business stakeholders with an emphasis on listening to needs, and monitoring impacts on business and industry.

Manitoba businesses have been impacted by supply chain disruption, interpretation of and compliance with health orders and protocols, availability and costs of personal protection equipment, business liquidity, and keeping up with commercial rent payments. The hospitality and tourism industries have been most impacted by travel restrictions; retail has been impacted by lagging consumer confidence; and employees have expressed hesitancy in returning to work over concerns with workplace safety. Manufacturing has been the least impacted sector.

Houde described the province's supports for business, industry, and individuals including economic relief like loans, grants, regulatory changes, extensions of due dates for bills and taxes, a moratorium on penalties for late payments, a ban on evictions, an "economic recovery credit" for seniors, and COVID research projects. Manitoba stood up a "Back to Work" payment for employees and a wage subsidy program for employers. Economic recovery efforts included rebates and grants, investments in infrastructure, support for food processing businesses, and B2BManitoba.ca, an online marketplace to connect MB businesses with materials needed to operate during the pandemic.

Delegates wondered if there were differences in the COVID unemployment insurance benefits between the two countries. There was a Canadian program that provided up to $2,000/month in the early days of the pandemic; businesses asked the government to phase this out due to its high popularity and purported impact on employee decisions not to return to work. Delegates asked about the MB Seniors Economic Recovery Credit, a direct and automatic provincial subsidy payment of $200 to those over the age of 65 years of age. Canadian delegates discussed economic support programs in Canada, which varied between provinces. Saskatchewan, for example, had fewer border closings. Delegates noted that liquor stores in both countries did good business and did not close as restaurants did.

The Ninth District's COVID Economy

Joe Mahon, Regional Outreach Director
Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Joe Mahone with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis described "The Ninth District's COVID Economy," based on surveys of businesses and gathering of data in the ninth federal reserve district of the United States, covering the three states of the ILF participants (but not Canadian provinces). Survey efforts were expanded during the pandemic timeframe to include partnering with organizations such as chambers of commerce to reach more potential respondents. Responses had been collected from 9,000 businesses.

Overall, the pandemic's economic impacts on states' economies were wide and negative, yet with regional variations. April and May 2020 were the most difficult months, with some rebound occurring afterward. Near-term future revenue expectations remained negative as of July 2020. South Dakota respondents noted lower impacts than other states in the region. Larger proportions of small businesses and sole proprietorships reported experiencing the greatest impacts on revenues. The greatest negative impacts were observed in entertainment, accommodation, and food services, with those industries experiencing the largest revenue declines. The finance and real estate sectors experienced the least declines.

In April 2020, rates of unemployment exceeded Great Recession levels. About 3 of 10 businesses in the district have cut staffing levels. Smaller businesses are more likely to reduce number of employees and cut wages. The largest impacts have been on people with the lowest incomes. Minneapolis Federal Reserve Chair Neel Kashkari believes that recovery likely will be consumer-driven, and that real, lasting economic recovery will start with controlling the virus until there is an effective vaccine and/or other treatment(s).

Delegates had further questions about wage cuts and other indicators. Discussion included clarification about delays in commercial construction projects, but not as much in residential housing construction. One graph of interest showed a large increase in visits to restaurants in South Dakota coinciding with the August 2020 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Session 2: Public Health Impact of COVID-19

Thursday, October 15 | 7 to 9 p.m.

Virtual Forum via Zoom

Consensus Council Executive Director Ann Crews Melton welcomed participants and introduced presenters, adding thanks for their ongoing work to respond to the exceptional demands of the pandemic. Silver-level ILF sponsor Missouri River Energy Services shared a welcome with delegates.

Presenters

Theresa Will, RN, MPH
Administrator
City-County Health District
in Valley City, ND

Donald Warne, MD
Director
Indians into Medicine
and Master of Public
Health Programs
University of North Dakota
School of Medicine & Health
Sciences

Kou Thao
Director
Center for Health Equity
Minnesota Department
of Health

Challenges and Lessons Learned during COVID-19

Theresa Will, RN, MPH Administrator
City-County Health District
in Valley City, ND

Theresa Will spoke to "Challenges and Lessons Learned during COVID-19" for local public health in North Dakota. March 11 was the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in North Dakota; March 13 the governor declared a "State of Emergency"; in May federal CARES Act funding arrived to public health units; and September 3 the first ND counties were noted as at increased-risk status.

Communication has been vital and challenging for public health during COVID. The emergency challenged personnel to communicate in new ways like virtual meetings and through cable television. Public health workers have been facing challenges of misinformation heard and spread by the people they serve. Will shared that public health staff members, some working more than 60 hours per week for months in a row, are tired and weary.

Public health personnel leveraged community partnerships with healthcare facilities and with other community organizations to unify local emergency responses, including utilizing large public and private facilities such as event centers to stage mass testing events. Public health administrators appreciate support provided by the ND National Guard.

Gaps noted by Will included shortage of personnel to respond, including a lack of nurses in schools to assist with testing and contact tracing. Another gap was a lack of personal protective equipment, including filtering facepiece respirators that require specialized fitting, single use and cloth facemasks, gloves, face shields, and goggles to prevent the spread of infection. Limited amounts of emergency supplies were available and quickly depleted.

The COVID pandemic has illuminated disparities in people's access to information, healthcare, and services; though unintended, COVID responses created or exacerbated disparities. This has cemented the realization that social determinants of health can and need to be addressed by thinking across sectors and considering "health in all policies."

Tribal Communities in the Red River Valley & COVID

Donald Warne, MD
Director
Indians into Medicine and Master of Public Health Program
University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences

Dr. Donald Warne's presentation, "Tribal Communities in the Red River Valley & COVID" highlighted how COVID has impacted Indigenous people. Warne began by acknowledging the original inhabitants of the land on which the University of North Dakota (UND) rests. North Dakota's federally recognized First Nations include the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa; Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation; Spirit Lake

Tribe; Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate. Dr. Warne explained the term "American Indian/Alaska Native" as a racial designation by the federal government; he suggested that "Indigenous peoples" is the most inclusive term for speaking about original people of a land.

Warne addressed COVID-19 challenges including noncompliance with face coverings. In areas with mask mandates, there are lower rates of COVID transmission and fewer deaths. At the time of presentation, North Dakota and South Dakota had some of the highest rates of COVID-19 infections in the US. There are continuing challenges with misinformation that COVID-19 is "like the flu" and/or "a hoax."

Testing, tracing, and treatment are necessary to reduce the spread of infection, the number of critical cases requiring high-level healthcare, and deaths. Increased impacts of COVID have been experienced by Indigenous people due to marginalization, the challenges of inadequate infrastructure and workforce, and reduced access to treatment.

Warne has been working toward not only health equality, but health equity, meaning some groups of people need more resources to reach the same level of health. He highlighted Indigenous health scholars teaching and conducting research through UND, and a new doctorate in American Indian Public Health to promote culturally relevant research, cohorts, and leaders to increase health equity.

A delegate asked whether jurisdictional challenges for Indigenous peoples exist in the US as they do in Canada. Warne noted the US Indian Health Services system is funded at only 50 percent of federal employee health insurance coverage. Warne noted relationships between states and tribal governments are important, because jurisdictional challenges exist also in the US.

COVID-19 in Minnesota

Kou Thao
Director
Center for Health Equity
Minnesota Department of Health

Kou Thao spoke to "COVID-19 in Minnesota," including existing disparities and strategies to address them. Thao has been working in incident command for the State of Minnesota COVID response and community testing during the pandemic, as well as serving as a member of the Governor's Committee on Community Resilience and Recovery.

According to data collected by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), people of color and American Indians are testing positive, being hospitalized, and admitted to the ICU due to COVID-19 at higher rates than the white population. Health disparities include prior chronic health conditions and systemic deficits amplified through the pandemic.

The Minnesota governor increased COVID-19 testing in Minneapolis-St. Paul in June 2020, where there was civil unrest after the murder of George Floyd. Of the 13,418 people tested, Asian and Latinx community members made up more than 50 percent of those testing positive for COVID. In St. James, with industries that employ many Latinx people, recent testing events revealed that 96 percent of those testing positive identified as Latinx.

MDH embedded an equity approach in its COVID responses through engagement with local public health, tribal health, and cultural, faith and disability communities to better reach the needs of diverse populations.

They provided language translation, utilized community liaisons, and partnered on communications with community-led nonprofits and media outlets.

Barriers to testing included stigma and fears of contracting the virus, fear of undocumented status being revealed, and/or fear of testing methods. Confusion about cost of testing was identified as another barrier. Barriers in access to testing such as finding test sites, available appointment times, language, and online registration were identified.

To respond to the barriers, MDH designed testing locations through a coordinated approach. The goals were to ensure access, provide "no barriers" testing, and ensure testing would be in trusted community locations. Testing was focused on reaching historically underserved populations such as people of color, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, and others.

Delegates were interested in how Hmong communities had been impacted; (disaggregated) data was not available in a category more specific than people self-identifying as "Asian." One delegate remarked on the apparent difference in response between North Dakota and Minnesota. Speaker Teresa Will responded that risk levels were identified at the state level, and responses were determined at the local level.

Presenters were asked to speculate on where we might be in six months. Presenters hoped that vaccines would be available, noting that education on safety and efficacy of vaccines would be critical.

Ann Crews Melton concluded the session by noting that Senior Program Director Scott Fry would be moving out of state and leaving his position with the Consensus Council. Scott was wished well and thanked for his past and current work with the International Legislators' Forum.

Session 3: Governing in a Pandemic — Legislative Power and Authority

Thursday, November 19 | 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Forum via Zoom

Consensus Council Executive Ann Crews Melton introduced Ariel Delouya, Consul General of Canada in Minneapolis, for opening remarks. Bryan Koontz, Consul and Principal Officer at the US Consulate in Winnipeg, sent regrets for not being able to attend.

Delouya congratulated the ILF on its 20th anniversary, marking the value of cross-border dialogue between the United States and Canada. He recognized the ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) Treaty, which entered into force on Canada Day, July 1, 2020. Delouya noted Canada and the United States remain each other's largest trading partners, partners in energy security, allies in defense, and are there for each other in emergencies and natural disasters.

Melton provided a brief recap of the two previous sessions on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and public health. Steering Committee Members were recognized for their efforts to organize in this unusual year.

Steering Committee Panel: Governing in a Pandemic

Moderator Ann Crews Melton asked Steering Committee members to share reflections on primary governance issues and whether they, as legislators, felt they had enough power to respond to needs brought about by the pandemic.

Senator Larry Luick, North Dakota

Does the governor have the power to mandate face coverings? Luick noted a high volume of correspondence from constituents, medical professionals, and others in favor of or in opposition to government response and mitigation efforts. He told of the small elementary school in Fairmount, ND, that cancelled school due to the high number of students and staff with COVID. He finds it tough to balance constitutional rights with protecting health. He expressed concern for those with underlying health conditions as well as for economic impacts on businesses.

Luick feels that as a group, the legislature has some power, but cannot take action unless in special session. When responding to constituent concerns, he tries to calm constituents and offer encouragement.

Senator David Tomassoni, Minnesota

Tomassoni spoke about the governor's decision to close restaurants, bars, and nonessential businesses to reduce the potential for the spread of the virus; at the same time, the federal government's response to small businesses helped them remain solvent, and the extra $600/week in federal unemployment insurance benefits helped individuals.

He noted the Minnesota governor can make emergency orders only when the legislature is in session; the MN State Legislature has been called to special session six times. He noted the majority in the House of Representatives is from the same party as the governor, and they will not vote to remove governor's emergency authority. Tomassoni believes that the ability to take action as a Senate minority party is limited. He concurred that it is difficult to determine what to do. Since the pandemic, Minnesota's budget surplus has disappeared. He has concerns for the budgetary deficit that will need to be faced when the legislature convenes in 2021.

Representative Dan Fabian, Minnesota

Fabian believes the COVID-19 pandemic will go down in history books. The governor's actions have been controversial. In beginning, there were zero cases of coronavirus in his district, while there were many in the Twin Cities. He reports that local citizens and officials felt that mitigation actions taken were "one size fits all," and were not a good fit for rural areas with less virus transmission. Local organizations had to cancel high school sports and youth activities.

Fabian expressed disappointment that the governor has not involved legislators in the decision-making process, unlike the previous governor. Governor Walz has spoken about his appreciation for weekly calls with the president, but has so far refused to hold similar calls with legislators requesting weekly meetings. Constituents do not feel that concerns are being addressed, and feel that Executive Orders are keeping people and families apart. Fabian appreciates that governors have tough decisions to make but wishes for more collaboration. While recognizing that all will never agree, it would be beneficial to at least host a platform that will allow grievances to be heard.

Fabian has constituents who have tested positive with mild cases and therefore do not see the need for strong actions. He relates that he would rather see mask mandates than business closures, and is concerned for small business viability.

MLA Dennis Smook, Manitoba

Manitoba is experiencing a second wave of the pandemic. Community transmission accounts for the high numbers of cases now overwhelming the healthcare system. Inaccurate information is being spread over social media.

Smook does feel the government has enough power. The premier can declare an emergency and consults with the minister of health. Governing in a pandemic is not an easy task, as every region of the province has different conditions. Meeting via Zoom conferences is now the norm. The province is in "Code Red," meaning only essential services are open and big box stores can sell only essential items. The longer the pandemic drags on, the more uncertainties come to the fore.

MLA Ian Bushie, Manitoba

Bushie serves the northeast section of the province as a member of the opposition New Democratic Party. His constituents are 95 percent Indigenous people, who fall under federal jurisdictions. He does see jurisdictional issues, especially with healthcare access. In some cases, place of residence determines where people can access care.

Bushie does not feel he has enough power as a legislator. He feels healthcare should be a nonpartisan issue and encourages a nonpartisan committee for the greater good. He states that COVID does not know which party you are in. Across all boundaries, he encourages all to come together.

Representative Steven Haugaard, South Dakota

Haugaard believes the governor should have power to take actions, but that the current South Dakota governor has sought to govern in a "hands-off manner." As Speaker of the House, Haugaard has asked the Department of Health to expand communications to include describing the severity of positive cases, not solely the number of cases. He believes that statistics do not tell the whole story. He shares that he had severe COVID-19, and while not hospitalized, did visit the emergency department of a hospital two times.

Haugaard is concerned about future bankruptcies because some businesses have been forced to close. He feels the SD Legislature does not have enough power, and refers to local jurisdictions who are taking actions to require masks and implement other mitigation measures. In South Dakota, he describes the legislative body as weak compared to the executive branch. Even with a super-majority of Republicans, actions and reactions of legislators to the pandemic are divided.

Senator Reynold Nesiba, South Dakota

Nesiba concurs with Haugaard that South Dakota government has a weak legislature and strong executive branch. He expressed frustration with the way the governor managed $1.2 billion in federal funds to deal with pandemic, and is frustrated that a special session was not called. Despite committee meetings to gather recommendations on how funds could be spent, the Joint Appropriations Committee did not use the recommendations. During a special session, the legislature passed a recommendation to set up small business, child care, healthcare, etc. funds for assistance. He feels that applications to apply for grants were too complicated and payments were delayed, so there is uncertainty about remaining funds that need to be spent. He expresses frustration and disappointment with governor's office for delaying the process.

Nesiba does not feel that he has power to deal with pandemic issues in the legislature. In the upcoming session, Democrats will have only 3 seats of 35 members serving in the SD Senate.

Question and Answer

Melton opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Of Manitoba's Indigenous people, are they seeing higher rates of cases, and what is the difference between provincial and federal assistance?

Bushie: In the first wave of pandemic, all communities did well. In the second wave, First Nations communities on reserves found that limited housing impacted people's ability to isolate to reduce the spread of disease. Other underlying economic and social conditions amplify the pandemic's impact on Indigenous peoples. During the first wave, tribal communities initiated their own controls and mitigation efforts to limit contact. In the second wave, he expresses the possibility that there could have been complacency leading to fewer actions take to reduce spread of disease. Bushie describes the federal response as "significant." He relates that there are many party lines to cross at the provincial and federal levels.

Tomassoni urged everyone to work together. He feels like we are in a world war. In the last world war, people came together, but in this situation, political sides are being taken. He struggles to know the right thing to do. While earlier on there were few cases in rural areas, now there are many cases in rural areas. He wishes the nation would come together.

Nesiba wishes the governor would lead through example, but instead uses rhetoric and refusal to take action, despite South Dakota experiencing a high number of COVID-19 cases. At Augustana University, all wear masks and are taking precautions. However, as rates increase in the county, infections are increasing at the university. He believes we should do the things that have been shown to work with legislators demonstrating leadership through public actions.

Smook remarked that Manitoba has a mask law in public places. Anti-maskers are holding rallies and protesting their use.

How can we come together and find common ground to keep communities safe?

Haugaard: If we would provide adequate information about severity of cases, people could help make decisions for themselves. With mask mandates, police would have to enforce, but that does not seem viable. Masking post-COVID made it difficult for him to breathe.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara, Manitoba, is a registered psychiatric nurse with post-doc study in public health. Her constituency resides at the core of downtown Winnipeg. Asagwara relates that in public health, we are asking for public buy-in to take measures to mitigate risks of COVID and need to

Silver Level Sponsor

be transparent with information. As someone with asthma, she was fearful that wearing mask would be very uncomfortable. But with commitment to the importance of mask wearing, was able to do so. People would like to be able to trust leaders through building relationships with constituents. She has been reaching out to community organizations and their leaders to ask them to share information as "go-to" people for up-to-date information. They are asking for people to participate in care for the community, and feels that Indigenous leadership has stepped up to do this effectively in Manitoba.

Which public policy issues have arisen as those needing the most support and need for change?

Senator Kathy Hogan, North Dakota: Clarifying roles of executive and legislative authority would be helpful; in North Dakota, we struggle with it.

Haugaard: Emergency powers need to be revisited. They grew out of late 1950s with concerns for nuclear attack. There is weak legislative authority, but he is concerned that changes would not pass the legislature.

Have the other US jurisdictions been able to expend all CARES Act funding, and do you have recommendations for South Dakota?

Hogan: North Dakota has completed allocation; she hopes that 80 percent will be spent. Legislators didn't have chance to make recommendations, but did bring forward a broad range of issues including business, health, childcare, and food access. The North Dakota State Bank was able to offer loans, then grants. The State Bank received about 25 percent of the CARES Act funding to assist businesses.

Tomassoni: If less than $1 million in spending, then could be approved by the governor, but if more than $1 million, would have to be approved by legislative committee. Everything has been impacted by the pandemic, so in Minnesota funding was widely spread.

Canada

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Fabian added that community banks were essential to helping businesses secure funding.

Consensus Council Deputy Director Greg Gallagher posed a question to Dan Fabian, who will be leaving the ILF after 10 years:

How would you assess the current state of inter-jurisdictional health? What are we learning, and what can we do better to work in common?

Fabian: In all jurisdictions, no matter the government party makeup, legislators feel frustration with the power of the executive branch. What have we learned? What has been reinforced for him is that collaboration is a great model. All have to make decisions in time of emergency in or outside of government. As the duration of the emergency lengthens, people grow weary of pandemic conditions, and legislators become frustrated. Minnesota came up with a plan to allow more decision-making at the county and local level.

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At the ILF, Fabian has enjoyed the exchange of ideas. Accomplishments may be more difficult to quantify. He believes that holding a conversation with your neighbor — whether across the street, the state, or the border — helps one better move toward solving problems. He appreciates the opportunity to have met people and visit new places through the ILF. Gallagher expressed thanks for Fabian's service to, participation in, and sharing wisdom with others as part of the ILF on behalf of Consensus Council.

Host Luick thanked all for participating. He offered the suggestion to look for any good that comes out of the pandemic, such as family or neighbors seeing each other in a different light, to look and listen to one another in different ways.

Ann Crews Melton closed the session and wished all a Happy American Thanksgiving and ongoing good health.

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International Legislators' Forum Annual Highlights

Over the past two decades, the International Legislators' Forum has focused on the following regional issues:

MB 2001—Sponsorship of 2Nation Tours, a travel and tourism program among the four jurisdictions.

MN 2002—Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among legislative leaders in the four jurisdictions to meet annually and provide substantial support for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (and analogous programs in Canada) in order to address flooding, drought, and water quality issues.

SD 2003—Established a regional renewable fuels working group, Powering the Plains (PTP), and began efforts toward cooperation and coordination among emergency management officials from the four jurisdictions.

ND 2004—Launched study of methamphetamine and pharmaceutical issues across borders in order to address addiction and incarceration alternatives.

MB 2005—Building on cross-border methamphetamine agreements, broadened discussion to collaboratively address all interjurisdictional criminal justice issues.

MN 2006—Emphasized the importance of basing water-related public policy issues on sound science. Supported efforts of the four jurisdictions' attorneys general and justice minister to address methamphetamine and criminal justice issues, and the signing of an interjurisdictional Amber Alert MOU to enhance mobilization in child abduction cases.

SD 2007—Provided broad support for the Regional Energy Roadmap developed by PTP participants, supported the enhancement of broadband technology in rural areas, and expressed significant concerns to the US Department of Homeland Security and relevant Canadian entities about the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

ND 2008—Highlighted issues related to rural community development, health, and infrastructure issues, including the need for further enhancement of broadband technology in the region, and continued discussions of water (LIDAR mapping), energy, and cross-border identification issues.

MB 2009—While specifically focusing on Lake Winnipeg, delegates developed agreements to address regional water quality and quantity issues, regional energy issues, and cross-border security, identification, and tourism.

MN 2010—Discussed water issues in the Red River Basin, including recommendations from the Red River Basin Commission regarding management, impoundment, retention, and diversion. Additional highlights included energy, commerce, border security, and the media.

SD 2011—Updates on developments in the Red River Basin; explored research and development efforts within the four jurisdictions and existing and potential opportunities for collaboration.

ND 2012—Focus on energy (integrated regulations), water (basin-wide collaboration), and trade (coordination and harmonization of regulations and policies).

MB 2013—Surveyed existing regional economic relationships and explored options to leverage cross-border relationships to strengthen the economic future of all jurisdictions. Outlined a set of general principles regarding energy development and related policies.

MN 2014—Focus on agriculture: historical aspects, current industry role regionally and nationally, existing and developing technologies, and increasing food supply demands for the world's growing population.

SD 2015—Addressed infrastructure and highway and railway regulation, current and future workforce needs, and updates, regulations, and initiatives in the Missouri River Basin.

ND 2016—Explored differences in Canadian and US regulatory models concerning genetically modified organisms; aquatic invasive species regulation and management within and between jurisdictions; and Canadian and US federal laws and jurisdictional steps to decrease human trafficking.

MB 2017—Discussed farmland use of drain tile, criminal justice reform and reinvestments, and alternative energy and energy systems. Toured the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

MN 2018—Focus on international trade impacting the northern plains and environmental permitting and review. Toured Soudan Underground Mine State Park and US Steel Corporation's Minntac Mine in Mountain Iron.

SD 2019—Examined local efforts to improve Big Sioux River water quality, regional impacts of marijuana legalization, and the opioid crisis in the northern plains.

Thank you

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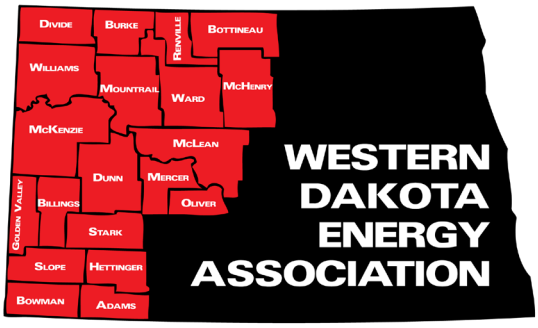

RED RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

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