

Meeting Reminders

Pick Up Your Badges

Conferences badges are required at all Annual Meeting events! Pick up your meeting badge at registration on the Convention level of the Hilton. Registration is open from 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Plenary Luncheon

Join us for the Opening Ceremony and Plenary Luncheon with the presentation of colors and Canada U.S. national anthems in Toronto I. Today's topic is Artificial Intelligence Technology and Emerging Legislation.

Don't Forget the App

We encourage you to download the CSG East Annual Meeting Conference App. Find program information, floor plans, and connect with other attendees all on your mobile device.

Off-site Policy Excursion

Reminder, if registered for the Health Policy visit to South Riverdale Community Health Centre at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 22nd. Bus boards from the University Avenue hotel exit.



Tanya Talaga is flanked by CSG East Annual Meeting Co-Chairs the Honourable Ted Arnott, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and Jamie West, Member of Provincial Parliament, Ontario.

Finding the Path Forward with Tanya Talaga

Tanya Talaga's mother is from Fort William First Nation, near Thunder Bay, Ontario in the north of the province and her father is Polish. Her family was impacted by the residential schools in Canada. She said that her family and their experiences inform all of her writing. "You always need to know who's telling the story." Talaga is a journalist now working with Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, and has written about Indigenous issues in the country, including in her best-selling book *Seven Fallen Feathers*.

Talaga began by delving into the Seven Grandfather Teachings, a set of Anishinaabe guiding principles on how to lead a good life. Typically, each of the teachings is embodied by an animal. The eagle represents love, the bear bravery, respect is the buffalo, the raven is honesty, the wolf represents humility, the beaver is wisdom, and the turtle is for truth. "To know all of the teachings is to know the truth." Talaga goes on to say, "The teachings should be defining what a good life is for all who live here now." "How do you lead a good life?" she asked. During the Executive Committee Plenary Lunch, Talaga shared the story of a friend, Dr. Mike Kirlaw, who she felt embodied the teaching of wisdom. Dr. Kirlaw found himself in Sioux Lookout for his residency after medical school. Upon arriving in the remote northwestern city, he was given a tour. He learned where the grocery store was, and he was shown two separate hospitals. One was for Indigenous patients, and the other was for everyone else. Originally built to handle outbreaks of tuberculosis, these "Indian Hospitals" morphed into nightmarish places where Indigenous children and adults were given inferior care and sometimes even experimented on. By the time that Dr. Kirlaw arrived in Sioux Lookout, the Indigenous hospital was still

in operation. In the dilapidated "Zone Hospital", 75 Indigenous patients were attended to by one nurse. He compared its conditions to those seen in South Africa during the Apartheid. "Dr. Kirlaw has seen the discrepancies between the haves and the have nots" Talaga said. She went on to say that our current policies create otherness and separation within not only our healthcare system and all aspects of life.

The problems that Dr. Kirlaw encountered in Sioux Lookout are unfortunately, not an isolated case. Nor are they unique to the Indigenous peoples in Canada. Inequity towards numerous groups can be traced back to the treaties and laws that founded North America. In fact, Talaga drew a striking comparison with a speech given by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. where he stated that North America was founded on violence - first the genocide of Indigenous people and then slavery - and we can still see the echoes of those hurtful policies across the continent today. "Racism is still alive in American society. We must see racism for what it is... Racism is evil."

"How do we get to the root?" asked Talaga. "We can't just patch up the problems. You need to get to the base." How do we change a system that has existed for over 150 years? "We need to stop with this isn't my jurisdiction" she said. Furthermore, Talaga says that everything has to change. "We need to get back to the laws of the lands, the treaties and the very modes of how we wield power in our countries." It's a start, but she says that we should have a further goal; to make the country better; to give everyone a voice.



Anishinaabe journalist and author Tanya Talaga, addressing delegates during the Executive Committee Luncheon on Sunday.

MOMENTS



Attendees enjoyed the Opening Event at the Ontario Legislative Building at Queen's Park. They were able to visit the historic Legislative Chamber, sample a true taste of Ontario, and experience some lively entertainment. The mariachi band and samba group were not to be missed!

Finding Innovative Ways to Tackle Workforce Shortages

Sunday afternoon's workshops wrapped-up with passionate discussions about one of the most pressing issues currently facing CSG member regions – the challenges of trying to get things done without enough people to tackle the work.

"The pandemic changed the workforce" panelist Humberto Mercader, Deputy Secretary for Strategic Initiatives at Department of Economic Development and Commerce of Puerto Rico stated. "We're in the midst of massive rebuilding after Hurricane Maria, with the need to recreate our infrastructure, while at the same time trying to drive innovation with the needs of our tech companies – but there simply is not enough qualified people available to accomplish what has to be done. Finding ways the government can help, such as re-examining the curriculum or shortening the time to achieve necessary qualifications for jobs are just some of the solutions we're looking at."

Meanwhile, Lee Umphrey, President and CEO of Eastern Maine Development Corporation, remarked that getting businesses to accept some of the proposed solutions, such as encouraging them to hire employees who were retrained after earlier life setbacks was proving difficult. "Apprenticeships help, but often companies aren't sure what that means. Getting the right training through the right structure is important for both the business and the employee, but it's making that happen that will take work", he explains.

Colby Thornton, Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Lifelong Learning Administration Corporation indicated that developing internal and external pipelines to help drive solutions to workforce shortages could be extremely beneficial. "From an internal standpoint, we need development programs to build skills based on what industries need now, and in the future," she points out. "With external pipelines, partnerships are key. Both states and industries taking a greater leap towards coordinated partnerships will help all involved, such as finding ways to offer teacher residency or provide tuition assistance for students, for example".

Panelists overall agreed that a massive mindset shift was needed to instigate sustainable change to address immediate labor shortages with "all players at the table". This could include modifying education systems to be more proactive, flexible and agile, having the state adapt curriculums to better meet the needs of businesses and industries and finding ways to help people become happier employees by better understanding their needs, providing them with the right support mechanisms and treating them with respect.



Colby Thornton, Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Lifelong Learning Administration Corporation (right) and Lee Umphrey, President and CEO, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (middle) look on as Humberto Mercader, Deputy Secretary for Strategic Initiatives at the Department of Economic Development and Commerce, Puerto Rico, provides remarks virtually during the Education and Workforce Development session on Sunday afternoon.

Investment in "Getting it Right from the Start" of the Utmost Importance



Senator Alison Clarkson, Majority Leader from Vermont, describes some of her state's responses for improving early childhood education. Senator Donna Frett-Gregory from the U.S. Virgin Islands (to Senator Clarkson's left) and Assistant Deputy Minister Holly Moran from the Ontario Ministry of Education, Early Years and Child Care Division (to Senator Frett-Gregory's left) made up the panel on Early Childhood Education and Child Care.

During the afternoon's first session of the Education and Workforce Development meeting, panelists brought their collective experience to put a spotlight on the urgent need to address issues in early childhood education. Top priorities included the need for funding, early childhood educator retention, and the importance of robust data to track program achievements. Panelists agreed that these issues were not unique to their respective regions, and that collaboration and dialogue are essential to finding solutions. Senator Clarkson, Majority Leader from Vermont, highlighted the impact of COVID in opening peoples' eyes to the importance of early childhood education.

To address labour shortages affecting the field of early childhood education, a multi-faceted approach may be required. Senator Clarkson explained that compensation is a key component of retention and requires active policy to ensure competitive wages. To expand the applicant pool, the U.S. Virgin Islands have looked at recruiting international candidates to help address labour shortages in the field. While Assistant Deputy Minister Moran spoke to the need for career pathways into potential leadership or administrative roles. Providing continuous professional learning alongside sufficient compensation can retain current early childhood educators and attract prospective talent, both local and international, to the industry. Senator Frett-Gregory also emphasized the need for a focus during a child's formative years. One of the primary roles of early childhood education is the early identification of learning disabilities

and cognitive/behavioural profiles that can help a student succeed in their academic career. This aspect of early childhood education is part of pediatric care, explained the Senator, where addressing cognitive issues helps to support the community in long run. Attention to tracking students as early as possible was shared by Assistant Deputy Minister Moran who also highlighted the need for accurate and longitudinal data to ensure that policies are meeting success metrics.

Early childhood education helps more than just children, but also helps their families, communities, and provides future benefits for the workforce and economy. Senator Clarkson stressed the need for all stakeholders to contribute towards solutions; families, communities and states, and the private sector each have a crucial role in enacting a comprehensive childhood education system. Panelists agreed that investment into early childhood education pays dividends in social benefit. From potential decreases in incarceration, pathways out of poverty, increasing academic and professional success of children, and the society that they will construct as adults.