

# **Report of the Honourable Marilou McPhedran to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration on International Travel for Parliamentary Assignments in Thailand, January 3<sup>rd</sup> - January 12<sup>th</sup> 2018**

## **Background and Objective of Travel**

On the invitation of Her Excellency Donica Pottie, Ambassador of Canada to the Kingdom of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, I travelled to Thailand to support Canada's efforts in promoting the rights of women and girls in the region. The official engagements were held from January 3<sup>rd</sup> to January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018. I was invited because of my recognized expertise in international human rights law, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda of the UN Security Council, and the related themes of peacebuilding, human trafficking, and global governance architecture.

The visit provided an opportunity to highlight the Senate of Canada and Canada's leadership on empowering the rights of women and girls. I had the opportunity to make presentations and meet with members of the diplomatic corps based in the region, Thai dignitaries and officials, civil society leaders, United Nations officials, and academics to discuss the work of the Senate, my work as a senator, and share my expertise within certain disciplines. Most of the interactions during this visit were scheduled by the Embassy of Canada to support Canada's multilateral initiatives in Thailand and Cambodia.

## **Report of Activities**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, I met with Ayesha Rekhi, Counsellor for Political and Economic Affairs and Ambassador Pottie at the Canadian Embassy, to discuss the itinerary and be briefed on the goals related to what was being scheduled. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, I travelled to Chiang Mai to meet with researcher/advocates of the Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development to review reports on women in the Asia Pacific Region and to discuss priorities set for the upcoming UN Commission on the Status of Women conference (CSW62) in New York in March 2018, which I will be attending (with 15 students whose involvement I am facilitating). On January 5<sup>th</sup>, I met with officials of UN Women at the United Nations Headquarters in Bangkok to be briefed on the Asia Pacific program of work. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, I met with Thailand's Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - Commission on Promotion and Protection of Rights of Women and Children, Professor Ratchada Jayagupta, and Police Lt. Col. Chachvan Bunmee (former Thai senator) to be briefed on their work in changing Thailand's approach to human trafficking, including sex trafficking of children. On Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> I moved into the Official Residence of Canada's Ambassador to Thailand – at the Ambassador's invitation, given the intensity of the schedule of meetings and events for January 8 to 12, 2018 set up by the Embassy involving presentations by me on many occasions.

On Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, I met with Canadian officials (RCMP and Embassy) to be briefed on efforts to combat human trafficking in the region and connections to human trafficking in

Canada. That afternoon, with Ambassador Pottie, I met with the Minister for Social Development and Human Security in the Royal Thai Government and other Thai government officials to discuss the recent monitoring report on Thailand issued by the UN treaty monitoring body for the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). I also met that afternoon with His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Royal Thai Government (and a former Ambassador to Canada) to discuss mutual areas of interest in furthering the Women, Peace and Security agenda of the UN. That evening, I attended the NPeace Awards, made a presentation and met with peacebuilders in the region.

On January 9th, I gave a guest lecture on the WPS legal framework at the NPeace workshop conducted by the Institute for Inclusive Security, and participated in a roundtable with members of the United Nations Development Program Asia-Pacific and civil society members.

From January 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, I was participating and presenting at events for FemParl, a forum to promote women's political participation in the Asia Pacific region, hosted by Canada. During FemParl, I was featured as the opening speaker, facilitated panel discussions, met with senior female officials from the United Nations, and participated in workshops on empowering women for change.

On the morning of January 12<sup>th</sup>, at the invitation of Ambassador Pottie, I was a participant in a private meeting she hosted for other ambassadors and their designates to meet with Cambodian human rights leaders who have sought asylum. On my last afternoon of the itinerary, at the invitation of the Royal Thai Government, I made an official visit on behalf of Canada to Thailand's Peace Operations Centre to meet with military trainers and to co-chair a roundtable discussion featuring the experiences and potential for expanding the role of Thai women peacekeepers in promoting the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda.

### **Next Steps**

Although Canada is understandably concerned that Thailand is currently governed by the military, the Embassy welcomed my presence as a means of furthering discussion about promoting the rights of women and girls. The country is currently in the process of implementing the National Women's Development Strategy and there were indications from government officials that there is a genuine interest in strengthening the Thai equivalent of a National Action Plan for implementing the principles of the UN Security Council suite of resolutions built on the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (adopted in 2000). It was agreed with the Embassy of Canada to the Kingdom of Thailand that I will remain available to provide support as requested with Thailand's efforts in promoting rights for women and girls and the WPS agenda. In addition, I am speaking at a number of events related to the upcoming annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women's beginning with the CSW-NGO Consultation on March 11, 2018 and I have agreed to be available to meet with the Thai delegation to follow up on meetings that occurred during my visit in January and the previous meeting I had, at the request of Thai officials, at the Meeting of Defence Ministers in November 2017 in Vancouver.

In all of my meetings with individual experts and organizations I connected with over the course of my visit in January, I agreed to act as a resource and provide support in their efforts in upholding human rights, if requested.

## **Conclusion**

Canada is known globally for our support in human rights and our relatively new feminist foreign policy for international development. Canada recently released the National Action Plan 2017-2022 for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. This is an indication of Canada's continued commitment to ensuring women are at the table when it comes to peacebuilding and upholding human rights. As a recognized expert in this area, I was pleased to be included in the Meeting of Defence Ministers in Vancouver (November 2017), in Minister Freeland's roundtable with civil society regarding the crisis on the Korean Peninsula in January 2018, as well as to be invited to support the diplomatic agenda of the Canadian Embassy in Bangkok in promoting human rights and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Although not democratically elected, the Government of Thailand has made commitments to implement the WPS agenda built from UNSCR 1325, with Thai National Measures and Guidelines, similar to a National Action Plan. However, there is work that still needs to be done in order to further the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Canada can provide some support where appropriate by engaging with the government, with civil society and by facilitating women, peace and security events and training opportunities, particularly for civil society leaders in Thailand and the region.

Over the course of my visit to Thailand, I was able to engage and learn more about the progress Thailand has made in supporting women and girls. I believe I was able to bring added value to our diplomatic presence in the region, highlighting the importance of the Senate in our democracy and our national commitment in promoting human rights. In my public report, the following quote from Ambassador Pottie was included:

*"One of the priorities of the Canadian Embassy in Thailand is gender equality, including women, peace and security and the mission tries to maintain a high profile on these issues," noted Canadian Ambassador Donica Pottie. "Our efforts received a boost when Senator McPhedran visited Bangkok for the NPeace peacebuilding awards and training program and the third edition of a Canadian initiative, FemParl, which brought together dynamic young women from South and Southeast Asia active in the political sphere. She was a key interlocutor at both events, much valued by participants for her expertise."*

## Budget Report

### Travel Dates:

- Travel to Bangkok from Canada: December 28 & 29, 2017
- Personal time in Bangkok: December 30, 31, 2017 and January 1, 2, 13, 2018 (5 days).
- Travel back to Canada: January 14, 2018.

### Expenses Report

Expense	Details	Budget (Approved by CIBA)	Actual
Airfare		\$4,429.00	\$3,063.80
	Flight change fees*	-	\$150.00
	Day trip to Chiang Mai	-	\$272.41
Accommodations**		\$850.00	\$239.16
Ground Transportation		\$250.00	\$75.77
Per Diems***		\$970.00	\$124.52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,899.00</b>	<b>\$3,925.66</b>

\*Change fee was required because I was advised of the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Vancouver on January 15 and 16, 2018 and had to change my flights to be able to participate in and observe a number of events on those days.

\*\*Hotel claimed for my arrival night on December 29, 2017, no other hotels claimed as I stayed in the Ambassador's Official Residence during working days and in a private residence of a relative on personal days.

\*\*\*Per diems (breakfast, lunch, dinner, incidentals) were claimed for 1-day trip to Chiang Mai, all other meals were provided in the Official Residence, or at my own cost on personal days.



Signature

February 15, 2018

Date