



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the ParlAmericas meeting on
Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the
Caribbean**

Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

**Bridgetown, Barbados
November 19 and 20, 2018**

Report

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Section of ParlAmericas attended the ParlAmericas meeting on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Regional Strategies and Partnerships, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, on November 19 and 20, 2018. The Canadian parliamentary delegation was composed of The Honorable Robert Nault, P.C., MP, President of ParlAmericas and Chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas.

Monday, November 19, 2018

OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome remarks

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks on behalf of ParlAmericas and other organizing partner institutions. Ms. Tonni Brodber, Deputy Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean, served as M.C. for the Opening Ceremony. Inaugural remarks were offered by Ms. Alison McLean on behalf of UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; by Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph on behalf of the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL); by the Honourable Robert Nault on behalf of ParlAmericas; and by His Honour Speaker Arthur Holder on behalf of the Parliament of Barbados. Each of the inaugural speakers shared reflections on advancing women's rights and gender-responsive leadership, and they highlighted the timely nature of this important meeting, given sustainable development priorities in the region.

In his remarks, the Honourable Bob Nault spoke about the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships, a continuous theme of the work of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality. He also stressed the importance of male parliamentarians' active participation in efforts to achieve gender equality, stating that "Men need to be allies to break down historic barriers and make sure that all people – women, girls, men and boys – have equal opportunity for livelihood and success; and that all people can live in a world without fear of discrimination and violence." He made reference to good practices in Canada such as Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and gender budgeting at the federal level. He extended thanks to the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada for the continued support to ParlAmericas which allows the organization to work on these types of initiatives.

Feature address

The feature address was delivered by the Honourable Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados. The Prime Minister shared reflections on the meaning of sustainable development and its relationship to women's empowerment. She referenced current global challenges indicating that progress towards equal rights cannot be taken for granted, as the gains that have been made are not translating at the community level or

reaching all members of society. Prime Minister Mottley drew attention to the important work of disrupting gender norms in society and also within political parties. She called on parliamentarians to use their positions of power and choice to have a positive impact on individuals' lives, and to have the difficult conversations about gender that are necessary to push the development agenda forward together. Prime Minister Mottley closed by stating that she intends to ensure that she will not be the last female prime minister of her country.

Working session: “Priorities for a Regional Gender Equality Strategy”

The first session was a multi-stakeholder consultation to gather legislative and other input for the forthcoming Regional Gender Equality Strategy of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Ms. Ann-Marie Williams, Deputy Program Manager for Gender and Development at the CARICOM Secretariat, presented on the process that is being undertaken to develop the Strategy. She explained that its overall objective will be to accelerate the effective implementation of priority actions in support of gender equality through a coordinated regional approach aligning with existing international and national frameworks. Ms. Williams reviewed some of the most prevalent barriers to achieving gender equality in the Caribbean region, among them, high rates of intimate partner violence, youth unemployment, teenage pregnancy, non-communicable diseases, and inequitable access to health services.

The meeting delegates then rotated through discussion tables to provide feedback on gender-responsive approaches to the following priority areas to be included in the CARICOM Strategy: 1) Good governance and political participation, 2) Freedom from violence, 3) Access to health services, 4) Social protection and inclusion, 5) Economic empowerment, and 6) Climate resilience. At the discussion tables, delegates shared key challenges, good practices in their countries, relevant legislative frameworks, and other parliamentary actions that could be taken to contribute to progress on that issue, as well as the resources needed to implement effective solutions. This part of the session was facilitated by Ms. Alisha Todd, Director General of ParlAmericas. At the tables, parliamentarians had the opportunity to contribute input and exchange with representatives from national gender machinery from Caribbean countries, in addition to members of the CIWiL Board of Directors, who hosted the tables.

Some of the recurrent recommendations shared during the report-back from the table discussions included the need for gender budgeting and integrated, systematic approaches to the issues identified. The importance of inclusive and quality education was also emphasized across the priority areas discussed.

High-level dialogue: “Promoting gender-transformative leadership to meet national development priorities: Strategies and partnerships”

The next session featured remarks by Her Excellency Dame Billie Miller, Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary of Barbados and Patron of CIWiL, on transformational leadership in the political sphere. Dame Miller spoke about the importance of women's representation in electoral politics and the improved quality of democracy when women's

perspectives are taken into account on all issues, not just those considered “women's issues.” However, she flagged that there are persistent obstacles to women’s participation, including economic barriers, competing obligations with care work, intersecting forms of discrimination based on race or class, and negative perceptions of politics.

In her view, the most persistent challenges emanate from within political parties, which are often dominated by men and exclusionary norms and entitlements. These and other barriers, such as gender-biased media treatment, are also present after women enter elected office.

Drawing on her long career in politics -- including 18 years as the only woman in parliament in her country -- Dame Billie Miller called attention to various strategies that can help to break down these obstacles. These included mentorship as a crucial support mechanism for women as they enter politics and seek to advance in their parties; she referenced CIWiL’s work in the region as an example of the benefits this strategy can yield. She also counselled “learning the politics within the politics of political parties,” and called on those already in leadership positions to commit to advancing women’s equal representation in politics. In the end it is the leader who determines the team, she stressed. This further connected to an overarching message in her remarks that it is not only women who should be responsible for gender-inclusive work.

To have the greatest impact on issues of importance, Dame Miller recommended specializing in that policy area and building “constituencies of interest” with others dedicated to the chosen topic. Moving initiatives forward in the legislature also requires a strong understanding of its rules, both unwritten and written.

Finally, Dame Miller spoke to the crucial role that NGOs can play in advancing women’s representation in politics. She stated that becoming involved with an NGO can provide an invaluable foundation for political careers. NGOs can also be productive partners for governments, she said, giving the example of the Barbados Social Partnership.

Dame Miller advised that progress comes in peaks and valleys and will require sustained efforts. She made reference to countries with parity in political representation and to Canada’s gender-equal cabinet which is setting an important precedent globally. She said that she was filled with hope by the discussions being held and the partnerships being made.

In the dialogue that followed Dame Miller’s intervention, the meeting delegates shared experiences from their countries in support of women in politics and gender-responsive policymaking.

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

Briefings and knowledge-exchange with regional stakeholders

The second day of the meeting consisted of a series of briefings from regional partners on their current projects to advance women’s political empowerment and gender equality, and the opportunities within them for collaboration with parliamentarians.

The first speaker, Dr. Halimah DeShong, Head & Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies – Nita Barrow Unit (IGDS: NBU) at the University of the West Indies, provided an overview of the programmes of study offered, as well as background on the history of research on transformational leadership at IGDS: NBU, explaining the institution's role in influencing gender-responsive development in the region. As an example, she detailed the LIVITY project, a four-year, seven-country partnership with the Barbados Council for the Disabled and the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality, with six core activities: a CSO incubator, groundings, leadership academy, annual policy forum, and street art festival.

Next, Ms. Ashell Forde, President, No! to Online Harassment and Abuse (NOAH), presented on her organisation, a charity formed by a group of ordinary Barbadians concerned about the growing prevalence of online abuse. NOAH provides resources to victims of online abuse and conducts seminars and workshops on topics such as child online protection, personal cyber security, cyber bullying, and combatting revenge porn. She highlighted Project CARE (Combatting Abuse through Research & Education), which has the objective of quantifying the problem of gender-based online abuse, raising public awareness, and training law enforcement officers in order to improve victims' experiences. Ms. Forde noted various ways parliamentarians could support NOAH's project and its broader aims, with a view to expanding these initiatives to the regional level.

Ms. Tonni Brodber, Deputy Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, then provided an overview of the organisation's mandate across the English and Dutch Caribbean, recent projects and programmes, and the type of technical support that can be provided to parliaments. In her presentation, she expanded on the findings of a recent study conducted with the Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES) that sought to investigate Caribbean perceptions of political leadership. The study looked at levels of acceptance and the most common explanations for the importance of women's involvement in politics, among other indicators. In her discussion of the results, Ms. Brodber highlighted how these findings could inform the adoption of strategies and legislation to increase women's political representation.

Dr. Tres-Ann Kremer, Head of Good Offices for Peace & Political Adviser for the Caribbean Region at the Commonwealth Secretariat, then presented on the outcomes of a new study, "Women and Political Parties in Five Small States of the Commonwealth Caribbean," which will shortly be expanded upon in additional countries. The study found that campaign financing is one of the most crucial challenges facing women wishing to run for election. The Commonwealth report on this study outlines strategies that can be adopted to address this issue. It includes summary recommendations under numerous other categories as well, such as negative campaigning, gender-sensitive party constitutions, and youth engagement.

Finally, Lady Anande Trotman Joseph, Chair, CIWiL, and Alisha Todd, Director General, ParlAmericas, presented a new joint CIWiL-ParlAmericas project, "Promoting Women's Political Leadership in the Caribbean." This three-year project is part of a larger hemispheric project funded by Global Affairs Canada, with activities that will contribute to strengthened capacities, support networks, and coordination amongst women leaders from different countries and generations; these activities will be coordinated out of a

permanent, staffed CIWiL headquarters. As the project will actively engage parliaments and partner organisations, Ms. Todd and Lady Trotman-Joseph encouraged the meeting's participants to support the future initiatives to unfold in their countries.

The last presentation in this session was delivered by two representatives from national gender machinery: Ms. Farmala Jacobs from the Directorate of Gender Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and Mr. Adel Lilly from the Gender Affairs Bureau in Guyana. Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Lilly reported on the preliminary outcomes of a strategic planning meeting convening gender machinery representatives from across the Caribbean, organized with the support of UN Women. The strategic planning session took place in parallel with the briefing sessions for parliamentarians on the second day of the meeting. Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Lilly joined the final segment of the parliamentary session to detail how the outputs from the previous day's consultation on the forthcoming CARICOM Strategy were informing the discussions and planning of the national gender machinery representatives as they further develop this document and strategic pathways for its implementation.

The presentations from the briefings session generated rounds of questions and dialogue with the presenters and meeting delegates. In an intervention during this dialogue, Hon. Robert Nault offered observations about the state of current discussions on women in politics, noting that they were far beyond questions of qualifications or merit, or whether political parties want women among their ranks. He said that it is clear that parties need women and that it has become unacceptable for parties to not have strong representation of women. As many of the discussions held over the course of the meeting had revolved around macro considerations, such as systems and reforms to make electoral processes more inclusive and welcoming for women, Hon. Nault shared some complementary observations on the micro, or community level, work that is necessary to successfully promote women candidates. Hon. Nault offered the example of his own experience campaigning with the support of a talented female organizer in his district, and he stressed the significant role that mentorship – whether by men or women – can play in mobilizing campaigns for candidates, even in districts considered unwinnable. He also took the opportunity to thank fellow delegates for the dynamic and informative conversations that had been held over the two days of meetings.

Presentation of CARICOM draft statement on social protection

Prior to the close of the meeting, Ms. Ann-Marie Williams gave a presentation on social protection systems, which are defined by the World Bank as systems that “help the poor and vulnerable cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the aging population.” Social protection systems is the priority theme of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in March 2019.

Ms. Williams shared with the meeting participants the draft CARICOM statement, “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” that will be presented on behalf of all Caribbean countries in agreement with the text during CSW. She welcomed feedback and revisions to the draft statement from the meeting delegates.

In addition to the more standard functions of social protection – protective, preventative, and promotive – the CARICOM positioning of social protection aims to be transformative, meaning that it does not intend to merely alleviate poverty but rather to transform lives through the pursuit of policies that rebalance unequal power relations that cause vulnerabilities.

Visit of the Canadian delegate to the Parliament of Barbados

His Honour Arthur Holder, Speaker of the House of Assembly (Barbados) and member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas, hosted a lunch meeting in the Parliament of Barbados for Hon. Robert Nault, to discuss geopolitical and other pressing issues in the Caribbean region. They were accompanied by the Honourable Alix Boyd-Knights, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Dominica and by Mr. Eastmond, the Clerk of Parliament of Barbados.

Then, during the parliamentary session presided over by Speaker Holder., Hon. Nault was invited to the Speaker's balcony where his presence was formally acknowledged; he was greeted by the parliamentarians in session.

During the session, Hon. Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, delivered a statement detailing the Government's plan to collect Value Added Tax on foreign online transactions. She said that the corresponding amendments to legislation would be presented to Parliament.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Section of ParlAmericas is thankful for having been a part of the meeting on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Regional Strategies and Partnerships. The discussions on women's political leadership and mainstreaming gender in national development in the Caribbean were extremely productive. The meeting gave the Honourable Robert Nault, as the Canadian delegate, the opportunity to learn and exchange with parliamentary colleagues from the Caribbean region on actions that can be taken in partnership with other stakeholders to forward this agenda. The delegate would like to express his gratitude to the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas and to each of the organizing partner institutions for their efforts in hosting this successful meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Robert Nault, P.C., MP
Chair
Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	ParlAmericas meeting on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean
DESTINATION	Bridgetown, Barbados
DATES	November 19 and 20, 2018
DELEGATION	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Robert Nault, P.C., MP
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 1,906.61
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 780.81
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 528.45
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS/ REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 3,215.87