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### **Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conclude Their 25th Conference in Ottawa**

**January 10, 2020 – Ottawa, Ontario**

The Honourable George J. Furey, Speaker of the Senate, and the Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons, have brought the 25th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) to a close. This biennial conference aims to strengthen parliamentary institutions in Commonwealth countries.

Over 180 delegates attended the conference, held in Ottawa January 6 to 9, including 47 speakers and presiding officers, parliamentary staff, and observers from 37 Commonwealth parliaments. Several bicameral legislatures sent delegates from both their upper and lower houses. Another six presiding officers represented Canadian provincial and territorial legislatures.

The conference officially opened on Tuesday, January 7, with a blessing by Algonquin Elder Claudette Commanda and a procession of speakers in their ceremonial robes through the Senate Foyer, followed by a welcome address by the Governor General, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, and Speakers Furey and Rota in the Senate Chamber.

Delegates attended workshops and plenaries on a range of topics relating to their central role within the parliamentary system, including parliamentary transparency and accountability, supporting effective legislative work, and the issues faced when displacing chambers. CSPOC also staged a special plenary session on inclusiveness as a means of embracing the changing needs of parliaments.

“This conference is a vital forum for speakers and presiding officers to build relationships with colleagues across the Commonwealth, while exchanging ideas and best practices,” Speaker Furey said. “The more effective we are in our roles, the stronger debates and parliamentary processes can be, and the more faith our citizens will have in our parliamentary systems.”

The 25th conference attracted a diverse contingent, with delegates arriving from every continent represented in the Commonwealth. “Many delegates travelled great distances to be here,” Speaker Rota said. “The fact that they have done so underscores their firm belief—and mine—in the importance of face-to-face meetings and parliamentary diplomacy. In an age when things can feel as if they are moving at lightning speed, their

gathering is proof of the value the conference participants place on direct interaction and thoughtful deliberation.”

The Honourable Lucien Lamoureux, Speaker of the House of Commons from 1966 to 1974, convened the first Commonwealth-wide gathering of speakers and presiding officers in Canada in 1969. This marks Canada’s third time hosting the conference, following the 17th edition (Montebello, Quebec) and Speaker Lamoureux’s inaugural gathering (Ottawa and Toronto). Canada continues to provide CSPOC’s standing secretariat and website.

The 25th CSPOC was also an occasion for Commonwealth parliamentarians to meet bilaterally to discuss issues of mutual interest.

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