



Report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Bilateral Visit to the United Kingdom

United Kingdom (London, England and Cardiff, Wales)

January 16 to 20, 2023

Report

A delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conducted a bilateral visit to London, England and Cardiff, Wales from 16 to 20 January 2023. The delegation was led by the Chair of the Canadian Branch, Alexandra Mendès, Member of Parliament (M.P.). The other members of the delegation were: the Honourable Patricia Bovey, Senator; the Honourable David M. Wells, Senator; Chandra Arya, M.P.; Marie-Hélène Gaudreau, M.P.; Gord Johns, M.P.; and Tom Kmiec, M.P. The delegation was assisted by Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary, and Brittany Collier, Advisor, Library of Parliament.

The purpose of the bilateral visit was threefold: firstly, to engage with parliamentarians from the United Kingdom (U.K.) and reinforce positive relationships between the two countries; secondly, to discuss and receive progress updates on issues facing the CPA, including with respect to its legal status; and, thirdly, to meet with Welsh Parliamentarians to exchange best practices and learn about how their devolved assemblies operate, including regarding matters such as the work of parliamentary committees.

The delegation wishes to thank the Honourable Ralph Goodale, High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for welcoming the delegation to London. The delegation also wishes to thank the High Commission staff, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, CPA U.K. and the Welsh Parliament for their support in organizing a successful mission.

CANADIAN BRANCH OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION MEETINGS IN LONDON, ENGLAND

Delegates began and ended their visit in London, England, participating in bilateral meetings in the U.K. capital on 16, 17 and 20 January. The meetings took place at the High Commission of Canada in the U.K. and at various locations around the U.K. Parliamentary Estate.

During their time in London, delegates met with several U.K. parliamentarians, along with members of the CPA and CPA U.K. The delegation also toured the Palace of Westminster and observed question period.

A. Briefing With the High Commission of Canada in the United Kingdom

The delegation began their visit with a briefing at the High Commission, also known as Canada House, with the Honourable Ralph Goodale; Robert Fry, Deputy High Commissioner; and High Commission staff.

The briefing provided an overview of the strong political, economic and defence relationships between Canada and the U.K. In terms of economic relationships, according to Global Affairs Canada, in 2022, the U.K. was Canada's third-largest single-country trading partner for goods and services, with trade valued at \$46.5 billion.¹ Approximately 3,700 Canadian companies, mostly small and medium-sized enterprises export goods to the UK.² The U.K. is also a source of foreign direct investment for Canada, and there are

¹ Government of Canada, [Canada–United Kingdom relations](#)

² Ibid.

over 1,000 U.K. affiliates in Canada contributing to the Canadian economy.³ Discussions during the briefing explored U.K. trade relations post-Brexit including negotiations towards a Canada–U.K. free trade agreement.

In terms of defence and security, the U.K. is one of the main export locations for Canadian defence services and products.⁴ There is significant defence co-operation between Canada and the U.K., as for example, Canadian and British personnel serve on reciprocal professional development and exchange programs.⁵ The briefing covered matters related to the war in Ukraine including Canadian Armed Forces training members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the U.K.⁶

The relationship between Canada and the Commonwealth, including trade between Commonwealth nations, was also discussed during the briefing. Canada is one of the top donors to the Commonwealth, contributing a total of \$10.86 million Canadian dollars in 2021–2022.⁷

Officials also provided an overview of the U.K.’s political landscape including discussion of the Northern Ireland Protocol,⁸ and the relationship between the U.K. Parliament and Scotland. The delegation also raised the issue of frozen U.K. state pensions for British pensioners residing in Canada.

B. Meeting With Commonwealth Parliamentary Association United Kingdom Staff

On 16 January 2023, the delegation met with CPA U.K. staff namely, Jon Davies, Chief Executive of CPA U.K., Martin Vickery, Americas, Caribbean and Europe Regional Programme Manager, and Alexander Ray, Programme Manager (Reporting Lead). Ms. Mendès provided introductory remarks noting the importance of the relationship between the Canadian Branch of the CPA and CPA U.K. Mr. Davies thanked the CPA Canada Region for hosting the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Halifax in August 2022. During this meeting, discussions focused on the procedure and operation of the U.K. Parliament and the work of CPA U.K. to provide training and support to other Commonwealth parliaments.

Following this meeting, the Canadian delegation attended an informal luncheon with U.K. Parliamentarians.

C. Meeting on the Restoration and Renewal of Parliamentary Estates

On 16 January 2023, the delegation discussed the restoration and renewal of parliamentary buildings with The Right Honourable the Baroness Smith of Basildon, member of the Restoration and Renewal Client Board and former member of the Joint

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For further information, see: National Defence, [Canadian Armed Forces to train Ukrainian junior officers in Latvia](#) News release, 10 May 2023.

⁷ Government of Canada, [Canada and the Commonwealth](#).

⁸ The Northern Ireland Protocol is part of the Withdrawal Agreement that governed the U.K.’s departure from the European Union. The protocol created a de facto customs and regulatory border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Committee on the Palace of Westminster, which has ceased to exist; The Right Honourable Mark Tami, M.P., former member of the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster and of the Delivery Authority Sponsor Board, which has also ceased to exist; and James Young, Chief of Staff, Restoration and Renewal Programme Client Team.

Both Canada and the U.K. have aging parliamentary buildings in need of renovation, restoration and renewal. Among other issues, the delegation heard about the need for urgent renovations to the Palace of Westminster, which serves as the meeting space for the U.K. Parliament. For their part, the Canadian delegates provided an overview of the work being undertaken to renovate parliamentary buildings in Ottawa. While renovations are well underway in Canada, the delegation learned that work on renovations to the Palace of Westminster has not advanced much beyond scoping studies.

In the course of discussions, U.K. parliamentarians detailed some of the challenges of their renovation project. For example, they noted that given the projected lengthy timeframe for the renovations, there is disagreement about whether U.K. parliamentarians should vacate the Palace of Westminster while the work is being completed. There are also concerns about the financial cost of the project and the public perception of these costs, which the delegation heard are estimated to reach between £7 and £13 billion (\$11.8 to \$21.9 billion Canadian dollars).⁹

Finally, the delegation learned about recent changes to the governance of the project. In 2019, the U.K. passed legislation establishing two institutions independent from Parliament: a delivery authority to carry out the work and a sponsor body accountable to Parliament to oversee the work of the delivery authority and determine the strategic objectives of the project, among other matters.¹⁰ Mr. Tami indicated that the establishment of the delivery authority and sponsor body was modelled on the structure used to deliver the London 2012 Olympic Games. However, following concerns over costs, timeframes and governance, the sponsor body was abolished through regulations that came into force on 1 January 2023.¹¹ The sponsor body was replaced by a new governance structure, including a Restoration & Renewal Client Board, Programme Board and Client Team. The Client and Programme Boards are both joint committees in the U.K. Parliament comprising parliamentarians from both houses in addition to lay members. The Client Board is responsible for making strategic decisions and recommendations related to the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster.¹² The Programme Board is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the renovations and makes recommendations concerning the project for the consideration of the Client Board.¹³ Both boards are supported by a joint department within the administrations of both houses, referred to as the Restoration & Renewal Client Team (the Client Team)

⁹ Exchange rate provided by Xe Currency Converter on 2 June 2023.

¹⁰ U.K. Parliament, [Parliamentary Buildings \(Restoration and Renewal\) Act 2019](#), Chapter 27.

¹¹ U.K. Parliament, [The Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body \(Abolition\) Regulations 2022](#), 2022 No. 1360; and U.K. Parliament, Committee of Public Accounts, [Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall](#), 52nd Report, Session 2022–23.

¹² U.K. Parliament, Committees, [About the R&R Client Board](#).

¹³ Ibid.; and U.K. Parliament, [About the R&R Programme Board](#).

comprised of staff transferring from the sponsor body.¹⁴ The Client Team will hold the delivery authority to account and support the Clerk of the House of Commons and the Clerk of Parliaments who now have “joint accountability for restoring and renewing the Palace” of Westminster.¹⁵ The delegation learned that the Client Team recently visited Ottawa to learn about the renovations of Canada’s parliamentary precinct.

D. Meeting on the Distribution of Powers Within Canada and the United Kingdom

On 16 January 2023, the delegation met with the following members of the U.K. House of Commons Procedure Committee: the Right Honourable Karen Bradley, M.P. and chair of the committee; the Honourable Chris Elmore, M.P. and treasurer of the CPA U.K. Executive Committee; Tonia Antoniazzi, M.P.; and Patrick Grady, M.P. The Right Honourable the Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, CPA U.K. Executive Committee Member, also attended this meeting.

During the meeting, Canadian and U.K. parliamentarians shared information about the distribution of powers within their respective countries. In 1998–1999, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were given the power to legislate on certain domestic matters and to vary some taxes set by the U.K. government within pre-established limits.¹⁶ The delegation learned about some of the issues related to the devolution of powers in the U.K. including a recent Supreme Court ruling which held that the Scottish Parliament does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence.¹⁷

The delegation also heard about a study the U.K. House of Commons Procedure Committee is currently undertaking on the country’s territorial constitution. The study is examining the distribution of powers between the devolved parliaments and the U.K. Parliament post-Brexit and intends to explore the separation of powers in other countries including British Overseas Territories. The committee expressed great interest in visiting Canada to learn more about the distribution of powers in Canada with a view to developing practical recommendations for its study.

E. Meeting on the Future of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

On 17 January 2023, the delegation met with Mr. Elmore and Mr. Davies to discuss the future of the CPA. The CPA has had the legal status of a charity in the U.K. since 1971.¹⁸ However, member parliaments and parliamentarians of the CPA have long questioned whether charitable status is appropriate for the organization, arguing that it should instead

¹⁴ U.K. Parliament, Committee of Public Accounts, [Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall](#), 52nd Report, Session 2022–23; and U.K. Parliament, Committees, [About the R&R Programme Board](#).

¹⁵ U.K. Parliament, Committee of Public Accounts, [Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall](#), 52nd Report, Session 2022–23.

¹⁶ See U.K. Government, Delivering for Scotland, “[Devolution](#),” Scotland in the UK; U.K. Government, [Guidance – Devolution settlement: Wales](#); and U.K. Government, [Guidance – Devolution settlement: Northern Ireland](#).

¹⁷ The Supreme Court, [Reference by the Lord Advocate of devolution issues under paragraph 34 of Schedule 6 to the Scotland Act 1998](#), Case ID: 2022/0098.

¹⁸ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), [Strategic Plan 2022–2025: A new vision for Commonwealth Parliaments](#), p. 9.

be recognized as an international, interparliamentary organization. At the 65th General Assembly in Halifax in August 2022, members agreed to a new road map to reach this goal.¹⁹ They agreed to continue discussions with the U.K. government about the status of the CPA and the potential relocation of the CPA Headquarters if no agreement is reached.

Meeting participants focused their discussions during this session on these two issues. Ms. Mendès explained that Canada believes that the CPA Headquarters should remain in London, if possible. However, she also noted that Canada would support future decisions concerning an alternative location for CPA Headquarters if required. Meeting participants discussed the upcoming Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to be held in Ghana in the fall of 2023, as well as diversity and inclusion initiatives within the CPA.²⁰

F. Meeting on the Work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association United Kingdom

On 17 January 2023, the delegation met with Lord Foulkes and Victoria Bower, Head of the International Partnerships Team at CPA U.K. At the meeting, participants turned their attention to the work of CPA U.K. including bilateral visits, supporting the parliaments of the U.K.'s overseas territories and recent projects on subjects such as modern slavery. Meeting participants shared information about the funding and structure of their respective CPA branches. The Canadian delegation also raised the issue of frozen pensions for British pensioners resident in Canada.

G. Meeting With the Chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

On 17 January 2023, the delegation met with Ian Liddell-Grainger, M.P., Chair of the CPA and CPA U.K. Executive Committee Member. Meeting participants discussed progress on work towards changing the legal status of the CPA, with Ms. Mendès, expressing the need for the issue to be resolved quickly. Discussions also addressed the hosting model, format and content of future Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences, as well as renovation of parliamentary buildings and the war in Ukraine.

H. Lunch With a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Delegation From The Gambia

On 17 January 2023, the Canadian delegation attended a luncheon with a delegation from The Gambia also visiting the U.K. Both delegations discussed the similarities and differences between their parliamentary systems as regards matters such as petitions, sitting times, and standing orders. The Canadian delegation learned more about the work

¹⁹ CPA, [65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada 20 to 26 August 2022: Conference Concluding Statement](#), p. 4.

²⁰ The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference provides the opportunity for parliamentarians to come together to discuss global political issues and developments. The conference comprises several elements including executive committee meetings and the General Assembly. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, [Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference](#).

CPA U.K. does to support other parliaments, including its work to help The Gambia establish a Women and Gender Committee and revise their Standing Orders.

I. Gallery Event at Canada House

On 19 January 2023, some members of the delegation attended the opening of an exhibit of Canadian artist John Hartman's work at the Canada Gallery in Canada House. The exhibit titled *John Hartman: Many Lives Mark This Place; Canadian Writers in the Landscapes that Inspire Them* displayed portraits depicting Canadian authors alongside the places that inspire them.

J. Meeting With the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat

On 20 January 2023, the delegation met with staff from the CPA Headquarters Secretariat (CPA HQ), namely: Stephen Twigg, CPA Secretary General; Jeffrey Highland, Editor, The Parliamentarian and Communications Manager; James Pinnell, Programmes Manager, Multilateral Engagement; Bénite Dibateza, Programmes Officer and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Coordinator; and Avni Kodnhia, Executive Officer, Secretary-General's Office.

Mr. Twigg provided an overview of the CPA's legal status as a charity and the organization's ongoing work with the U.K. Government to change its status to that of an international, interparliamentary organization. Among other issues, Mr. Twigg explained the General Assembly's voting process for decisions about the legal status of the CPA.

Participants also discussed the work of CPA more broadly. For example, Ms. Dibateza gave an update on the planned work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network on matters such as gender-sensitive parliaments, gender-sensitive reviews of Commonwealth parliaments and the development of a course on women's parliamentary caucuses. She also shared examples of regions using money received from the Regional Strengthening Fund to undertake work on gender sensitive parliaments and to fund initiatives such as a workshop in Canberra, Australia on Champions for Gender Equality. The Regional Strengthening Fund was established to provide regions with the opportunity to apply for funding for CWP-related projects. Participants also discussed other topics including the representation of women in Parliament and the upcoming Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana in fall 2023.

Ms. Mendès raised ongoing and future initiatives of the Canadian Branch of the CPA such as the twinning initiatives that have been established between provincial/territorial legislatures and Commonwealth partners from the Caribbean as well as her desire to restart the Canadian CPA Seminar last held in 2017.

CANADIAN BRANCH OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION MEETINGS IN CARDIFF, WALES

On 18 January 2023, the Canadian delegation participated in a series of bilateral meetings at the Welsh Parliament – the Senedd Cymru – in Cardiff, Wales. Before beginning their meetings, Al Davies, Senior International Relations and Protocol

Manager, welcomed the Canadian delegates and showed them a short film about the history of Wales, the Pierhead and the Port of Cardiff.

A. Meeting on Climate Change

The delegation met with members of the Welsh Parliament's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee (CCEI) including the Chair, Llyr Gruffydd, Member of the Senedd (M.S.) and committee members Jenny Rathbone, M.S., and Joyce Watson, M.S., among others. The meeting began with Mr. Gruffydd describing the committee's role and some of its recent work on legislation concerning single use plastics, clean air and renewable energy. Mr. Gruffydd also shared the future priorities of the CCEI which include climate change, sustainable communities and protecting/enhancing the natural environment. Further, Mr. Gruffydd provided information about the *Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, which requires certain public bodies in Wales to work towards the achievement of seven well-being goals.²¹

During the discussion, the delegation posed questions – and shared information about the situation in Canada – with respect to devolution/distribution of powers, public transportation, food security, climate change impacts, protection of wetlands, natural resource development and site remediation. Delegates identified similarities between Canada and Wales, noting among other points that the cost of local foods is often higher than imported produce in both countries.

Following the meeting on climate change, delegates toured the Welsh Parliament where they had the opportunity to raise questions on matters including governance, interpretation from Welsh to English, the sitting calendar and daily business, hybrid Parliament, Senedd elections, and the representation of women.

B. Official Lunch

The delegation attended an official luncheon hosted by Rhun ap Iorwerth, M.S., Chair of the CPA Wales Branch. At the luncheon, Mr. ap Iorwerth, welcomed the delegation and discussed the importance of the relationship between Canada and Wales. In her opening remarks, Ms. Mendès thanked the hosts for their hospitality and underscored the importance of the CPA as a network enabling parliamentarians to gather and build relationships. After the luncheon, the delegation had the opportunity to observe question period.

C. Meeting on Devolution in Wales and Current Priorities of the Welsh Parliament

The delegation next met with Siwan Davies, Director of Senedd Business, for a session on devolution in Wales and current priorities of the Welsh Parliament. Ms. Davies began the session by providing a brief history of devolution in Wales. The ensuing discussion covered various matters including dispute resolution, the role of the Welsh Parliament in the U.K. post-Brexit, and the relationship between members of the Senedd and the U.K. Parliament. The delegation shared information about Indigenous governments; the

²¹ National Assembly for Wales, 2015 anaw 2, [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

separation of powers between federal, provincial and territorial governments; equalization and transfer payments between various levels of government; and electoral boundaries.

The delegation also learned about future priorities of the Welsh Parliament including governance reforms to increase the number of members and how they are elected, the functioning of the Welsh Parliament post-pandemic and the position of Wales within the U.K. Other matters explored during the meeting included elections for members of the Senedd and candidate diversity.

D. Meeting on Protecting and Promoting the Welsh Language

The delegation met with Dr. Eleri James, Senior Infrastructure and Research Officer, Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner. Dr. James described the history of legislative initiatives regarding the use of the Welsh language, including the passage of the first language statute enacted by the Welsh parliament known as the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.²² During the meeting, Dr. James explained the role and priorities of the Welsh Language Commissioner, and provided information about Welsh language standards, promotion of the Welsh language, standardized Welsh place names and the Commissioner's work with language commissioners from other countries. In their discussions with Dr. James, delegates asked about many subjects including Welsh language testing and education, Welsh literature and media, and compliance with Welsh language standards. During their meeting, the delegation also shared information about official and Indigenous languages in Canada with Dr. James.

E. Visit to St Fagans National Museum of History

On 19 January 2023, the delegation visited St Fagans National Museum of History, an open-air museum showcasing different periods of Welsh history.

Respectfully submitted

Ms. Alexandra Mendès, M.P.

Chair

Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs

²² Llywodraeth Cymru, LawWales, [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to United Kingdom
DESTINATION	London, England and Cardiff, Wales
DATES	January 16 to 20, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Patricia Bovey Hon. David Mark Wells
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Chandra Arya Marie-Hélène Gaudreau Gord Johns Tom Kmiec Alexandra Mendès
STAFF	Rémi Bourgault Brittany Collier
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 23,736.95
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 18,253.80
PER DIEMS	\$ 10,445.89
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 309.61
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 11.22
TOTAL	\$ 52,757.47