



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
on the Bilateral Visit to Australia**

**Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**

**Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Sydney, New South
Wales and Hobart, Tasmania
February 5 - 15, 2015**

Report

A delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visited Australia from February 5 to 15, 2015. Mr. Joe Preston, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, led the delegation composed of Chris Charlton, M.P. and Rodger Cuzner, M.P. The delegation was assisted by Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Federal Branch.

During their visit to Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Sydney, New South Wales; and Hobart, Tasmania the delegation met with their CPA counterparts, legislators, government officials and individuals in the private sector. In all instances they were received by the Presiding Officer or Officers of each legislature. The CPA constitution encourages visits between member countries with the objective of giving parliamentarians the opportunity to discuss matters of common interest in bilateral relations and issues within the international Commonwealth organization. In addition, the visit objective was to further the Caribbean Initiative, a project launched by the CPA Federal Branch and endorsed by all provinces and territories across Canada. The project aims to provide a framework that allows the legislatures of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to establish working relationships with legislatures in the Commonwealth Caribbean, along the lines of those undertaken between the Australian and the Pacific Regions of CPA. The purpose of the project is to increase cooperation between parliaments, including the sharing of ideas and best practices. The delegation met with legislatures in Australia to learn more of the projects undertaken and to witness first-hand the success of the programme in the collaboration of Australian States and Territories with Pacific island countries of the Commonwealth.

1) General Overview:

The Government of Australia is a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as Head of State. The Commonwealth legislature is bicameral and consists of a 76-member Senate and a 150-member House of Representatives. Twelve senators represent each of the six states and two from the mainland territories, all elected for a period of six years. A system of rotation ensures that half the Senate retires every three years. The four senators who represent the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory are elected concurrently with members of the House of Representatives and the duration of their terms of office coincide with those for that House (a maximum of three years). Each member represents a single electoral division with roughly the same number of voters. Each of the six states and two territories has their own legislature.

Federal elections are held at least every three years. The last election was held on September 7, 2013 and the writs for the half-Senate election cannot be issued prior to July 1, 2016. The next House-only election will be called following the dissolution or expiry of the current parliament and must be held on August 6 2016 at the earliest or January 14, 2017 at the latest.

Voting is compulsory in Australia. The Senate and the House of Representatives have different electoral systems. While both systems are preferential, the House of Representatives ranks all candidates on the ballot paper in order of preference. A successful candidate would be supported by 50% plus 1 votes. In the event that no candidate receives more than 50% of first preference voters, the next preference of voters for the other candidates are distributed until one candidate emerges with the majority of votes. The Senate is elected by a system of proportional representation.

At the time of the visit, the delegation experienced the results of a spill motion or leadership caucus vote, targeting the Prime Minister Tony Abbott. The Prime Minister survived the challenge to his leadership brought about by a slide in support for the Conservatives and resurgence for the Labor party following a landslide defeat only 10 months prior.

2) Visit to the Australian War Memorial:

The delegation had the opportunity to have an extended visit to the Australian War Memorial while in Canberra. The Australian War Memorial combines a shrine, a world-class museum, and an extensive archive. The Memorial's purpose is to commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war. Its mission is to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society. It was opened in 1941, and is widely regarded as one of the most significant memorials of its type in the world. Delegates noted the clear line of sight from the War Memorial to Parliament House.

The Australian War Memorial consists of three parts: the Commemorative Area including the Hall of Memory with the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier, the Memorial's galleries and an extensive Research Centre. The Memorial also has an outdoor Sculpture Garden. Each year on Anzac Day (25 April) and Remembrance Day (11 November), the two major days of commemoration in Australia, the Memorial holds National Ceremonies on the Parade Ground. These are attended by thousands of official guests and visitors and are followed by the wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier.

Anzac Day is one of Australia's most important national occasions. It marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War. Australian and New Zealand soldiers formed part of the expedition that set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula in order to open the Dardanelles to the allied navies. The ultimate objective was to capture Constantinople (now Istanbul), the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and an ally of Germany. Both sides suffered heavy casualties with more than 8,000 Australian soldiers killed. The Gallipoli campaign had a profound impact on Australians at home, and April 25 soon became the day on which Australians remembered the sacrifice of those who died in the war.

3) Meeting with the Presiding Officers – Senator the Honourable Stephen Parry, President of the Senate and Hon Bronwyn Bishop, Speaker of the House of Representatives:

The Honourable Stephen Parry is the Senate representative for Tasmania and has been President of the Senate since July 2014. The Honourable Bronwyn Bishop, the member for Mackellar, New South Wales and the 29th Speaker of the House of Representatives, held the office as of November 2013.

The meeting offered the opportunity for the delegation to review the various reasons why the Federal Parliament of Australia had decided to withdraw from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and to discuss how Australia might reconsider this position and return to the membership. Although the Australian states continue to be active members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Federal Branch decided to cease its membership effective January 2012. Reasons include concerns regarding the financial and administrative stewardship of the Association. Australia stated that they would watch carefully the succession of the Secretary General and determine at a later date the possibility of resuming its membership. As a competition process had been launched, there is hope that Australia might return once the new regime is in place. Both the Canadian delegation and their Australian counterparts suggested that Canada would play an instrumental role in assisting Australia in determining whether or not it would wish to rejoin.

The principal reasons for leaving stemmed from the deficiencies in the accountability and consultation mechanisms of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association headquarters in London, United Kingdom especially at the time when Dr. Shija, the now deceased Secretary General had been in charge. There was hope expressed with the newly elected Executive Committee (EXCO) Chairperson, Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury. She is the first woman Speaker of the Bangladeshi Parliament, and has had much experience working with Commonwealth countries and governments. Moreover, the international job search for a new Secretary General could do much to revitalize the effectiveness of the Association.

The delegation also had the opportunity to discuss the Caribbean Twinning Initiative, modelled after the most successful program presently underway in Australia with Pacific island countries of the Commonwealth. Both Speakers were impressed by this initiative in the Americas context and offered their support whenever necessary.

4) Meeting with the Speaker and Clerk of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Legislative Assembly:

The delegation met with the Speaker, Mrs. Vicki Dunne, MLA and the Clerk, Tom Duncan of the ACT Legislative Assembly while in Canberra.

The ACT legislature is a unicameral assembly, unlike most parliaments in Australia. It has 17 members from three constituencies, each elected for four-year terms by the Hare-Clark System variation of the single transferable vote of proportional

representation. The Assembly was originally elected by a modified d'Hondt system, but a 1992 referendum supported the Hare-Clark method, introduced in 1993.

The ACT was initially managed by a federal minister responsible for the territories. Self-government began in 1988 when the federal government passed the **Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act**. Since the ACT has no local council, the legislature is responsible for both territory and local government functions.

As part of the CPA's twinning initiative, the ACT Legislative Assembly has a partnership arrangement with the Parliament of Kiribati. One of the Committee rooms in the legislative building is devoted to highlighting this twinning relationship. Projects have included an orientation program for new parliamentarians, held in Kiribati in November 2011. There is also a recommendation that the ACT Branch agree to visits between the two branches at least once every Assembly by members and officers of the respective parliaments.

In addition to discussions concerning the successful twinning program, the delegation held a meeting with the Speaker to discuss the withdrawal of the Australia federal branch of the CPA stating that while Canada shares the concerns expressed by the Australia federal branch, the Canadian membership is of the view that such problems can only be corrected by working within the Association rather than withdrawing completely. The Speaker, Vicki Dunne, who is a member of the CPA Executive Committee (EXCO), is in agreement with the Canadian perspective.

5) Visit to Sydney, New South Wales:

The visit to Sydney had two objectives for the delegation: an insight into Canadian investment in Australia and an understanding of the twinning program undertaken by the New South Wales Parliament with Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. New South Wales is the largest state in Australia with a population of 7.5 million, of which about two-thirds reside in Sydney.

Australia is the largest destination for Canadian investment in the Asia Pacific region and is seen by many Canadian companies as a springboard into neighbouring markets. In this regard, Australia is a major regional contributor. Its economy is relatively strong from a global perspective, and it maintains a favourable business climate and strong and growing relationships with the emerging economies of the Asia Pacific.

Much of Canada's trade with Australia is placed between companies in traditional sectors such as mining and transportation, with a significant growing interest in Canadian oil and gas suppliers and service providers. In addition, Canadian industry opportunities in agri-food, ICT, life sciences, clean technology, renewable energy, green building and defence procurement offer opportunities that are well suited to the Australian marketplace. In addition, Australian think tanks, academics, and corporations are interested in sharing knowledge and expertise in the area of corporate social responsibility, especially as it relates to the real challenges that prevail in the nearby Pacific Island countries.

The delegation received an extensive briefing from several stakeholders in the Canada-Australia marketplace, ranging from Blackberry, RBC Capital Markets, the MBO group, specializing in assisting with acquisitions of private companies, Minter Ellison law firm, Murdock Cheng legal practice, the Black Diamond Group, specializing in world-renowned experience in domestic and international modular building projects and OpenText, the global leader in enterprise information management. All companies recognized the tremendous potential of being positioned in Australia, not only as a stable marketplace, but also its solid links to the ASEAN Marketplace. Australia is known for its active agenda of trade liberalization with other Asian countries, having signed free trade agreements with New Zealand, Singapore, the United States, Thailand, Chile, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan and most recently China. Canada can only benefit from this spirited trade approach, especially now within the context of the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations. Such an agreement, they argue would provide for an enhanced value chain participation by Canadian suppliers, secure investment provisions in line with Canada's investment abroad and domestic objectives, while providing for substantially increased market access for a wide range of goods and services.

6) Visit to the New South Wales Parliament:

New South Wales (NSW) has Australia's oldest Westminster-style Legislature dating back to 1856. The Parliament consists of two houses: the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. The legislative Council houses 42 members, all elected by proportional, optional preferential voting. Members are elected from State-wide elections, with the entire State acting as a single electoral district. The term is fixed at eight years, with half of the Council being elected every four years. The Legislative Assembly houses 93 members (MLA's), all elected by optional preferential voting, with voters ranking one or more candidates in order of preference. Each MLA represents one electoral district with a maximum term of four years.

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with the President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Don Harwin. The discussion centred around the twinning relationship that the Parliament has established with the Parliaments of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (the Bougainville House of Representatives) and the Solomon Islands (the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands) as established in June 2007. During the time of the visit, Ignatius Hamal, Executive Officer to the Clerk, had undertaken a four-week secondment to the NSW Parliament to develop material on the application of parliamentary privilege in the Bougainville context. With respect to the Solomon Islands, Patteson Lusi, Director of Civic Education, was on secondment from the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, employed in a part time capacity by the NSW Parliament to undertake research and writing tasks related to the Twinning project. Delegation members were most impressed by the scope of the projects undertaken by these Parliaments, recognizing the tremendous benefit that similar projects within the Caribbean twinning initiative would provide within our own hemispheric context.

7) Visit to the Parliament of Tasmania:

Tasmania is Australia's smallest state with most of the 514,800 population residing in the capital Hobart. It has a bicameral Parliament composed of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly. The Legislative Council is unique in that it always has had a majority of independent members, and as a result has never been controlled by any government or political party. It is comprised of 15 members all elected by optional preferential voting with the members elected from single-member electorates. The term is fixed for 6 years, with periodical elections held for either two or three electorates every year.

The House of Assembly is comprised of 25 members, elected by proportional representation, single transferable voting system whereby each voter must indicate a minimum of five candidate preferences. Each of the five electoral districts is represented by 5 MLA's, serving for a maximum term of 4 years.

Meetings were held with the President of the Legislative Council, James Scott Wilkinson and the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Elise Archer as well as Michelle O`Byrne, Member of the House of Assembly and a very active member of the CPA and CWP (Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians). They discussed the twinning partnership arrangement undertaken between the Parliament of Tasmania and the Parliament of Samoa. One key outcome of the program has been the establishment of the community outreach office, which aims to foster greater engagement between the Parliament and the community, encouraging participation while increasing awareness on matters related to parliamentary work. A project has also been undertaken to increase the number of women in the Samoa Parliament.

8) Visit to Incat and Liferaft Systems (LSA):

Delegation members visited the shipyard building site for Incat. The company based in Hobart, Tasmania provides lightweight aluminum ship solutions for ferry operators, special service providers and militaries, including vehicle-passenger ferries, military support vessels and crew ships. The design of the Incat craft provides for greater speed and stability. Members toured a ferry in its final building stages that was destined for the Japanese market.

The delegation then toured Liferaft Systems (LSA), a company providing rapid and safe evacuation of passengers and crew into large capacity life rafts. The unique design was conceived in 1992 and these life rafts are now installed on all types and sizes of passenger & personnel carrying vessels, including conventional ferries, high-speed craft, military vessels and large private yachts worldwide. LSA has sold its life raft systems to B.C Ferries and has a North American presence in Vancouver, British Columbia.

9) Visit to the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS):

IMAS is a Centre of excellence for marine and Antarctic research. It was established in 2010 as a teaching and research institute of the University of Tasmania and builds upon

more than 20 years of university core partnership in cooperative Antarctic research, and looks to provide a similar role in temperate marine and Southern Ocean research. Its research goes beyond traditional scientific and social scientific conventions, and the Centre works to develop environmental understanding and sustainable development for the benefit of Australia and the world.

The three core research programs are fisheries and aquaculture, ecology and biodiversity and oceans and cryosphere linked to climate change, ocean-earth systems and oceans and Antarctic governance.

In closing, the delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Canadian High Commission in Canberra as well as the consulate in Sydney and particularly the Consul General Mario Ste-Marie and Louise Hannan Consul & Senior Trade Commissioner, for their valuable advice and assistance in arranging the meetings associated with the visit. The delegation would also like to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Development (DFATD) and the Library of Parliament for the provision of briefing material and for briefings prior to departure.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Rodger Cuzner, M.P.

Canadian Branch of the
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Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Australia
DESTINATION	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Sydney, New South Wales and Hobart, Tasmania
DATES	February 5-15, 2015
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Joe Preston, M.P., Chris Charlton, M.P. and Rodger Cuzner, M.P
STAFF	Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$45,489.86
ACCOMMODATION	\$7,384.41
HOSPITALITY	\$762.48
PER DIEMS	\$4,161.28
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,113.04
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$1,682.07
TOTAL	\$60,593.14