



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
to the Name of the Mid-Year EXCO Meeting  
Canadian Branch of the  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)  
Nuku'alofa, Tonga  
April 16 - 21, 2012**

## Report

Joe Preston, M.P. attended the EXCO and Working Party meetings in Tonga on behalf of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The 35 Members of the CPA Executive Committee met in Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa, as guests of the Legislative Assembly and the government of Tonga. The meeting was officially opened by His Majesty King Tupou VI, who said the cross-pollination of ideas and experiences in parliamentary governance through CPA meetings is essential to prevent the Commonwealth's more than 175 Parliaments and Legislatures from stagnating. The Committee was welcomed to Tonga by Hon. Lord Lasike, MLA, Speaker of the Legislature. He said hosting the meeting, the first Commonwealth-wide parliamentary gathering to be held in Tonga, enabled Tongan Parliamentarians to exchange ideas with Members of other Parliaments as they implement constitutional reforms which brought in fully responsible democratic governance with the 2010 elections.

The Committee's Chairperson, Rt Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP of the United Kingdom House of Commons, said the government, the Legislative Assembly and the people of Tonga had demonstrated their commitment to parliamentary democracy and the Commonwealth by hosting the CPA meeting within a month of the untimely death of His Majesty King George Tupou V. A CPA support programme began this year to assist the Legislative Assembly of Tonga in implementing the parliamentary elements of the democratic reform programme. CPA Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija said the Committee also approved the agenda for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Small Branches Conference to be held in Sri Lanka immediately before the main conference. He said the conference will enable about 75 MPs from 30 jurisdictions with populations of up to 500,000 people to discuss issues affecting them.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee agreed at its 16 to 21 April meeting in Tonga that the agenda for the 58<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference should examine global issues under the theme of "Ensuring a Relevant Commonwealth for the Future". One of those issues will be the establishment of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights, an office proposed to Commonwealth Heads of Government by their Eminent Persons Group on Commonwealth reform at the October 2011 meeting of government leaders. Details of the office are currently being considered by governments. MPs will debate the merits of establishing the office.

Commonwealth reform proposals included greater involvement of young people in Commonwealth affairs. The CPA Executive Committee agreed to support this initiative by establishing an annual Commonwealth Youth Parliament. Sir Alan said an annual Commonwealth-wide Youth Parliament will encourage young people to become involved in parliamentary democratic governance, one of the Commonwealth's fundamental principles. The CPA and the United Kingdom Parliament will host a Commonwealth Youth Parliament later this year to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Sri Lankan conference will also include meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians who are represented on the Executive Committee by their Chairperson, Hon. Alix Boyd Knights, MHA, Speaker of the Parliament of Dominica. The Secretary-General said the Executive Committee also approved programmes and services to support the evolution of Parliament and the professional development of its Members and staff in such diverse matters as international trade, the scrutiny of government spending and parliamentary practices. He noted that the CPA has hosted four previous Commonwealth Youth Parliaments since 1997. Holding them annually will give many more young people an opportunity to experience the challenges of being an elected representative of the people.

The CPA is the Commonwealth's oldest ongoing organization which in 2011 celebrated 100 years of promoting the advancement of parliamentary governance in its diverse Commonwealth forms. It is composed of the Parliaments and Legislatures in 53 of the 54 Commonwealth nations and their overseas territories. It has a membership of close to 17,000 Members of national, state, provincial and territorial Assemblies. The only Commonwealth country not currently in the CPA is Brunei, which does not have an elected Parliament. The CPA Branch in Fiji Islands is in abeyance as the South Pacific country's Parliament has been dissolved by the current military government.

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Hiebert, M.P., Chair  
Canadian Branch of the  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Mid-Year EXCO Meeting
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Nuku'alofa, Tonga
<b>DATES</b>	April 16-21, 2012
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Joe Preston, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$11,382.99</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$27.34</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,410.33</b>