



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference of the Caribbean,  
The Americas and The Atlantic Region**

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

**Anguilla**

**June 28-July 3, 2008**

## Report

Sukh Dhaliwal, M.P. represented the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) as an observer at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference of the Caribbean, The Americas and The Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held at the Cuisinart Resort & Spa, Anguilla from June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. Other attendees included:

Anguilla	Antigua and Barbuda
Bahamas	Barbados
Bermuda	British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands	Dominica
Guyana	Jamaica
Monserrat	St. Kitts
Nevis	St. Lucia
Trinidad and Tobago	Turks and Caicos Islands
United Kingdom (observer status)	

Hosted by the Anguilla Branch of the CPA, the conference had delegates considering its theme “The Role of the Legislature in Controlling and/or Contributing to over-development.” The conference was honoured to receive many distinguished guests, such as the Hon. Robert Hughes, senior member of the opposition in Anguilla.

The opening ceremony included an address from David Carty, Honourable Speaker of the Anguilla House of Assembly, Chairman of the Regional CPA and President of the Anguilla Branch. Mr. Carty emphasized that the CPA makes up for the often limited training available to Parliamentarians. Through his peers, he was able to develop the skills that make for a good Speaker. He also suggested that there is a worrisome trend of opposition parliamentarians being supplanted by non-governmental organizations and the media, and that parliamentarians need to consider whether the opposition has adequate powers to fulfill its democratic responsibilities.

Planned events for the attendees included an island tour, eight issue sessions and several social events, which facilitated many noteworthy exchanges between delegates. During the course of the conference the delegates discussed the topical regional and international issues in order to promote change for future generations. A range of topics were covered in the sessions:

- Session 1: “True independence of the legislature is more urgent now because of the current state of development in our territories” (Jamaica)

- Session 2: “The legislature is not well placed to promote social/policy development and must therefore be content to ensure that laws are passed in accordance with established rules” (Trinidad & Tobago)
- Session 3: “How essential is education on offshore finance and technology to the legislature in responding adequately to development issues” (Cayman Islands)
- Session 4: “Development has led to such a modification of our culture that we are in danger of losing that which makes us a unique Caribbean people” (Barbados)
- Session 5: “A real look at the effects of over-development and practical safeguards to address same” (British Virgin Islands)
- Session 6: “How do we tell the difference between growing pains of development and the existence of over-development” (Anguilla)
- Session 7: “Foreign investment: Is it more a liability than an asset in our countries” (Bermuda)
- Session 8: “The impact of climate change on development” (Anguilla)

The central theme of the conference was over-development, which is a topical question in the rapidly-growing Caribbean nations. The large numbers of big hotel and resort developments underway on these islands are producing rapid changes.

These nations recognize that they need development to grow their economy and improve their quality of life, but they are struggling to keep pace with their infrastructure and social services. The host, Anguilla, is facing especially acute infrastructure challenges. Creating proper sewage and garbage disposal is a particular problem for several states.

The Caribbean nations are also experiencing rapid changes in their culture and population backgrounds, causing them to question whether some changes are occurring too quickly. Crime has emerged as a major concern in the Bahamas.

There is an emerging consensus in the Caribbean that a proper planning process needs to be in place to meet these challenges, and that this process must be accountable and transparent. They increasingly appreciate the importance of consultation to ensure that development is balanced.

There was, however, disagreement on the ability of the legislature to drive new social policy. There was also a recognition that women need to play a larger role in the male-centric Caribbean parliaments and that they should be given management responsibility for economically important portfolios, like industry and finance, and not just social portfolios.

Two sessions, one presented by the Cayman Islands and one by Bermuda, considered the importance and impact of foreign direct investment (FDI) on the development of island nations. Many of their citizens are not certain that FDI is a liability or an asset for their communities. There is a perception that people come and take advantage of their

community. The only taxes some firms pay are the import duties on their goods, leaving many wondering if they are contributing their fair share.

While there is a need for increased levels of corporate social responsibility among investors, some are proposing that firms be asked to take a greater role in the community by offering scholarships to locals. This is seen as a way to improve the education and skill level of local populations.

Many rich immigrants are buying up of all the best land in the Caribbean, leaving less and less for locals. It has led to a boom in the construction of large estates of rich foreigners. The reduced availability of land is impoverishing some locals.

Another session, presented by Barbados, focused on the effects of development on local culture. Many CPA members are concerned about losing their Caribbean culture because of a wave of immigration that is changing the ethnic and cultural makeup of their countries. There was, however, substantial disagreement and discussion of this issue.

The population of the Caribbean is increasing rapidly and many countries do not have enough schools in place to handle the bulge. There is a shortage of proper training for the teachers that they do have. The situation is seen as a threat not only to education levels, but also to their ability to maintain their culture.

The conference highlighted the importance of public policy focusing on children, education and social disruptions. Delegates felt that both social and physical infrastructure are important for cultural development.

The final session of the conference, presented by Anguilla, discussed the impact of climate change on development. While many economists have considered the environment to be something of a luxury good that only rich nations can afford, the conference revealed a different reality: even for underdeveloped nations, the environment is emerging as a key issue.

The delegates from the Caribbean were worried about the future that they are leaving for their children and grandchildren. They emphasized that there is a need for tax incentives to finance investment in green technology and innovation. The major concerns in the region are fossil fuels, agriculture and land use.

Global warming was seen as the greatest ecological threat to humanity. Kent Hughes Butts, an analyst with the US Army, said that climate change has surfaced as a critical security issue in the post-Cold War era.

The effect of global warming on water levels is critical for Caribbean nations because rises in the water level can destroy beaches that are their key economic drivers; further increases could even wipe some nations off the map.

As a Canadian observer, I was able to relate some of the key lessons that Canadians have learned about the environment. We recognize that our behavior has to change. There is increasing recognition that appeals are simply not enough to achieve the kind of change that is required. Instead, what is essential is that we put a price on pollution and stop letting polluters use our atmosphere as a free garbage dump. We can do this by reducing taxes on things we want more of, like income and investment, and shifting

those taxes to things we want less of, like pollution and waste. This can be good for the planet and for voters' wallets. There was widespread agreement among delegates on these points.

There is a need for innovative solutions, courage and commitment on the environment. Delegates were confident that you don't need to sacrifice the economy for the environment, and that both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability can be achieved at same time.

As this was the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference I have attended, I believe the CPA and its members must be commended for contributing to the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. Parliamentarians attending the conference were enriched and played an important role in promoting a plethora of fundamental issues.

On the whole, I was greatly impressed by the quality of the presentations and the depth of the discussions. By networking with each other and learning from other members' experiences, parliamentarians were able to achieve common goals and contribute in a substantial manner. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Anguilla and the Anguilla CPA for their warmth and wonderful hospitality, which as I discovered is typical of the culture of Caribbean people. In addition, I would also like to extend my appreciation to CPA Canadian Branch for their efforts in ensuring the success of the conference.

Respectfully submitted,

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

## TRAVEL COSTS

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	33 <sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference of the Caribbean, The Americas and The Atlantic Region
<b>DESTINATION</b>	The Cuisinart Resort & Spa, Anguilla
<b>DATES</b>	June 28-July 3, 2007
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Sukh Dhaliwal, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 3876.42
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 191.93
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	
<b>MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 4,068.35