



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the 55th
Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference**

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

**Arusha, Tanzania
September 28 – October 6, 2009**

Report

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which attended the 55th Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Arusha, Tanzania from September 28 to October 6, 2009, has the honour to present its report.

55th CPA Conference, Arusha Tanzania

More than 800 parliamentarians and parliamentary officials from approximately 175 member national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures around the Commonwealth attended the meetings in Arusha as guests of the Parliament, government and peoples of Tanzania from September 28 to October 6, 2009. Due to the political climate in Canada prior to the conference, the Canadian Branch sent only one delegate rather than the standard eight-person delegation to the conference. The Canadian Branch was represented by the following delegate:

Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator

The Canadian Branch delegate was part of a 35 member Canadian Region delegation to the Conference, representing the provincial and territorial legislative bodies of the Canadian Region.

The official start date for the Conference was October 1, however as in previous years, several delegates from the Canadian Region arrived in time to participate as either delegates or observers at the Small Countries Conference from September 30-October 1 or as delegates at the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Business Session which was held on September 29. These meetings are traditionally held in advance of the official arrival date for the Conference delegates.

During the Small Branches Conference, the following topics were discussed during the plenary sessions:

- Policy Responses to the Global Financial Crisis in Small Economies
- Utilizing Committees in Small Parliaments
- Machinery of Government in Small States: Issues and Challenges
- The Vulnerability of Small States: What Technical and Practical Advice can the Commonwealth Offer?
- Can Trade Liberalization Benefit the Commonwealth in the Current Economic Climate?

As Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians-Canadian Region, Hon. Maria Minna was unable to attend the conference, **Ms. Charlotte L'Écuyer, MNA**, Québec, Canada, CWP replaced the Chair at the CWP steering committee meetings. As the Chair of the Canadian Branch and Regional Representative, Mr. Russ Hiebert, MP was unable to attend the Conference, he was represented by **Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator** at the EXCO meetings held on September 30 and October 1.

On October 2, 2009, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete officially opened the 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Chair of the conference, Hon. Samuel Sitta, MP, Speaker of the Tanzania National Assembly addressed the participants and extended a warm welcome to all.

As is the usual practice at the Annual Conference, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Dr. William F. Shija addressed the delegates following the official ceremonies. The Secretary General concentrated on the general themes of the conference, *The Commonwealth and the CPA: meeting Future Global Challenges*.

The Secretary General marked 60 years of the modern Commonwealth and stated that the theme “The Commonwealth at 60: Serving a New Generation” could not be a more fitting tribute to the future of the Commonwealth; that is, the young generation.

Canadian delegates participated in the following workshops:

- CWP SESSION – The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Women
- Workshop A: Coalition Governments: Parliamentary Democracy in Dilemma?
- Workshop B: Policy Responses to the Global Financial Crisis
- Workshop C: Role of Commonwealth Parliaments in Combating Terrorism
- Workshop D: The Role of Parliament in Shaping the Information Society
- Workshop E: The Role of Parliamentarians in the Elimination of Violence Against Women with Particular Reference to Domestic Violence
- Workshop F: Climate Change – Are Policy Solutions Working?
- Workshop G: Developing Mechanisms to Remedy Root Causes of Political, Economic and Social Conflicts
- Workshop H: The Commonwealth and Youth – How to Engage Future Generations in Representative Democracy

The workshops commenced with the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians session on *The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Women*. The following summaries of the workshop discussions include a compilation of summary reports from the CPA Secretariat as well as observations and interventions from Canadian participants.

The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Women

The CWP Session addressed the impact of the global financial crisis on women. Due to the financial crisis, women are facing reductions to export potential; decreasing social, education and health services; limited access to microcredit; increased debt load; reduced income; increased infant, maternal and child mortality rates and diminished household welfare. In order to improve the financial situation, women must have access to microfinance with minimal interest rates. The CWP will approach the World Bank and Commonwealth nations to propose increased regulations of microcredit institutions. While the financial crisis affects all nations, it is the developing world which is most at risk. In order to address the financial crisis and its effects on women, the CWP must promote gender-based budgeting to ensure that the fiscal stimulus packages are benefiting women at the grassroots level. At the request of the CWP, the Commonwealth Secretariat will distribute guidelines on gender-responsive budgeting to member governments to ensure sustainability for all women. There is a need for

capacity-building on gender-based budgeting in the regions and the CWP will work with its partners to enhance programs and information sharing in support of gender-based budgeting.

Ms. Charlotte L'Écuyer, MNA, Québec, Canada stated that women parliamentarians must be involved in the budget process either as committee members or as Ministers.

Hon. Kashamala Tariq, Pakistan, CWP Chairperson requested that all CWP regions share their experiences with respect to gender-responsive budgeting on the CWP website. Ms. Tariq commented on the exorbitant interest rates charged to clients by microcredit institutions on loans that were originally sourced from the World Bank at very low rates. It was agreed, that the CWP write a letter to the President of the World Bank and to Ministers of Finance to regulate interest rates charged by microfinance institutions.

Hon. Kathleen Casey, Speaker, Prince Edward Island, Canada, spoke to the importance of the CWP programs and pledged her support as member of EXCO. Hon. Kashamala Tariq, Pakistan, Chairperson of CWP reported that it was unanimously agreed by the CWP to request an increase to the program budget from 15% to 30%. Ms. Tariq spoke to the importance of engaging men in discussions on the impact of the global financial crisis on women. Men must also advocate for gender-responsive budgeting.

Coalition Governments: Parliamentary Democracy in Dilemma?

Workshop A addressed the issues of the emerging trends of coalition governments in Africa. During the discussions, a divergence of ideas on the topic emerged. Many speakers believed that coalition governments were a result of failed democracies and democratic processes. It was raised that these were governments for convenience and were bound to fail. Other delegates believed that coalition governments mandated by the people themselves resulted in economic successes and political stability as exhibited in their countries.

Delegates from India and Malaysia stated that in order for a coalition government to work effectively, underlying conditions must exist including:

- The formed government should work within agreed policies and rules.
- There must be transparency and the rule of law in the running of that government.
- The government should always strive to serve the interests of the people.
- There must be a continuous communication among the members to the coalition in order to avert disputes.

Delegates suggested that in the case of failure of coalition governments, countries should move towards proportional representation. Also, it was suggested that countries move away from politics of competition to politics of complementarities.

Policy Responses to the Global Financial Crisis

Workshop B addressed the policy changes that have been implemented in response to the global financial crisis. Special consideration was given to the anticipated effects and outcomes as they relate to small and developing economies. Indicators of the global

financial crisis include massive unemployment, bank failures, increasing indebtedness, lack of growth of the real economy and decreasing tourism revenue. The critical factors leading to the crisis were identified as insufficient regulation of the financial sector by the government, overdependence on conventional economic policy, inadequate accounting and failed monitoring of the state of economies. It was determined that policy measures must be taken to counteract the global financial crisis and it was agreed that their approach and effectiveness varies from country to country.

Role of Commonwealth Parliaments in Combating Terrorism

Workshop C addressed the role of Commonwealth Parliaments in combating terrorism. Participants accepted that parliaments have a significant role to play in ensuring the safety and security of those they serve to represent. The effectiveness of parliaments in combating terror may be enhanced by greater cooperation and information sharing among member jurisdictions. It was also noted that parliaments must be prudent when considering security initiatives to ensure that the right balance is being maintained between security and the protection of human rights. Any new security initiative must not erode the freedoms and liberties so cherished by citizens of the Commonwealth. Participants explored the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, the relationship between the developed and developing world and the question of what constitutes terrorism and the difficulties associated with defining it.

Discussion Leader Hon. Dr. Willbrod Slaa, MP, Tanzania emphasized the importance for the Commonwealth to strike an appropriate balance between civil liberties, human rights and new security innovation. Dr. Slaa stated that the Commonwealth should work to create a definition of terrorism in presenting a unified approach to more effectively and cooperatively combat terrorism.

The general theme emerged that the Commonwealth has a role to play in combating terrorism but must be careful in so doing to ensure that civil liberties and hard fought for freedoms are not eroded. Further, the complexity of the problem demands that each jurisdiction may well require different measures to effectively get to the root of terrorism; however, the sharing of information and cooperation among member states of the Commonwealth will undoubtedly provide benefit and will serve to assist the Commonwealth in combating terrorism.

The Role of Parliament in Shaping the Information Society

Discussion Leader, Hon. Asser Kapere MP, Namibia opened Workshop D discussions by highlighting the challenge of parliamentarians in acquiring expertise in using information communication technologies. Discussion leader, Hon. Meira Kumar, MP, India, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, drew the attention of participants to the immense possibilities of ICT to make information and knowledge available freely to all citizens. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha shared her excitement about legislation in India since 2000 which opened up direct access for citizens to information which deepened democracy. Ms. Michelle O'Brien, Parliamentary Strengthening Program, World Bank stated that ICT could be a tool to lend greater transparency to the budget process in order to fight corruption. The moderator underlined the importance of access to ICT for all, the problems of cost and literacy in developing countries, the need for parliamentarians to be computer literate, the need for political will to use ICT and the need for adequate funding to set up the infrastructure. The workshop concluded with agreement that generating the political will to harness ICT for creating access, transparency and good governance is a challenge and that it is imperative that parliamentarians play a catalytic role in the process.

The Role of Parliamentarians in the Elimination of Violence Against Women with Particular Reference to Domestic Violence

Workshop E commenced with a call to Parliamentarians to encourage governments to come up with a national strategy which can address the issue of violence against women.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians pointed out that many governments lack the necessary expertise to develop and implement policy relating to violence against women. Therefore, a more cooperative relationship between governments and civil society should be developed to combat violence against women. There is no doubt that the civil society has a significant role to play however, governments must be the movers of the initiatives that would eliminate domestic violence. In this regard, parliamentarians have a significant role to play. The need for training of the judiciary was raised. This included training for Supreme Court justices to public defenders and prosecutors to social workers and support personnel so they are equipped to handle cases where women's rights have been violated.

It was agreed that Parliamentarians must advocate for the empowerment of women and support programmes that will increase women's representation in power, politics, and financial projects. It should be underscored that a lack of economic resources, underpins women's vulnerability to violence.

Discussion leader, **Ms. Charlotte L'Écuyer, MNA**, Québec, Canada stated that governments must create family courts if they do not exist. She further stated that law enforcers should be allowed to intervene in the family and cultural traditions if required. These interventions should not be limited by privacy concerns. She further commented that this concept of privacy is often abused and therefore if not tackled, domestic violence will not be reduced. Mme. L'Écuyer stated that it is important to build networks of women who have been victims of domestic violence in order to raise self-esteem and also allow them to cope in society.

Climate Change – Are Policy Solutions Working?

Participants of Workshop F agreed that all areas in the Commonwealth are experiencing the adverse effects of climate change on their local environments. These effects are manifested in extreme weather events and apparent changes in weather patterns. These changes present themselves differently in the regions including, severe reductions in the levels of precipitation in some regions, exceptionally heavy rainfall in other regions and a general increase in temperatures around the world. The recent natural disasters in the Asia and Pacific regions have been caused or exacerbated by the effects of climate change. There is a high level of concern among Parliamentarians about climate change, and members of the CPA would benefit from an ongoing dialogue on climate change. Such dialogue enables members to exchange experiences and become better informed in all aspects of the debate, including analysis of trends, predictions of outcomes and proposed policy approaches.

Delegates felt it was important to share their many experiences in relation to climate change, from reporting on the direct impact of climate change in their local environments through to identifying policies and programs which they considered to be effective in addressing the problems of climate change, and proposing practical measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. The examples raised included government legislation and action plans; government support for UN proposals and also acknowledgments of the positive commitments of other countries and regions; New Zealand's pledge of financial support for climate change; Japan's Cool Earth Promotion Programme; the European Union's Global Climate Change Alliance; Australia's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol together with its recent announcement of a climate change programme; and Bangladesh and UK parliamentary climate change inquiries. Delegates agreed that systems and mechanisms need to be responsive to local conditions and that everyone should join in and commence action to reduce emissions immediately. Furthermore, there was recognition that assistance to less developed countries and areas would be needed.

Hon. Madame Fatima Houda-Pepin, Deputy Speaker, Québec, Canada agreed that all countries are united in experiencing problems associated with adverse climate change. Sustainable development, climate change and energy should not be dealt with in isolation. Québec has a good reputation for addressing the problems arising from adverse climate change and it is making every effort to ensure that natural resources are developed in a sustainable manner. Renewable energies account for a high proportion of Québec's total energy consumption including wind-power and hydro-electricity. The Sustainable Development Act (2006) establishes a management framework to guide all government action in Québec in the interests of present and future society. The Act affirms the right of all citizens to live in a healthful environment and obliges the government administration to pursue and foster sustainable development. Furthermore, there is a requirement for these measures to be monitored and parliamentarians have a role in examining plans.

Hon. Ted Staffen, MP, Speaker, Yukon, Canada, identified that the Yukon Government has established a climate change action plan, with the goals of leading the province in the response to climate change, improving knowledge of climate change, conducting

surveys and assessments of current situations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2020.

Developing Mechanisms to Remedy Root Causes of Political, Economic and Social Conflicts

The main issue raised in Workshop G concerned the need to have appropriate legislative structures and good practices in place that would prevent the breakout of conflicts arising from political, economic and social conflicts and that would lead to their peaceful resolution should they arise.

The speakers who took part in this workshop came up with the following proposals:

- i) to have in place a constitution and other legal instruments that would guarantee a free, representative and transparent electoral process, institution building to provide for the rule of law, e.g. an impartial and efficient judiciary and law enforcement agencies, a parliament that would enact laws following a broad consultation process that would respect the interests of all sections of society and a parliament that would effectively exercise its oversight function to scrutinise the actions of the executive against abuse of power and corruption thus leading to good governance;
- ii) to make resources accessible to all, the proper distribution of national wealth and planning development in such a way that would benefit different regions and different social groups; and
- iii) tolerance and respect towards different ethnic and social groups and access to employment opportunities, education, health and other services to prevent social exclusion.

The Commonwealth and Youth – How to Engage Future Generations in Representative Democracy

Workshop H participants agreed that the demonstration of responsible and accountable leadership is vital if young people are to be allowed to have faith in the system. In discussing the best means of engaging young people in representative democracy, delegates called on the political leadership to see youth as partners rather than as competitors for power. Education is a key component of ensuring greater awareness of the possibilities of politics for creating solutions to the problems facing young people. To achieve this, the school curriculum should be expanded to suit local conditions which vary considerably among different jurisdictions. The process of engaging young people should be transparent. Engagement with the young must be genuine and involve changes to the internal structures of political parties. Young people must see representative democracy not as a means of getting a job but as means of serving. A need was identified for structures within the Commonwealth and the CPA to engage with youth comparable to the structures for improving participation of women in politics.

Copies of the complete Workshop Reports from the 55th CPA Conference from which excerpts have been taken are available on line at the following web address:

<http://www.cpahq.org>

In conclusion, the delegates would like to express their appreciation to the Parliamentary Research Branch of the Library of Parliament for the excellent

background information they prepared for the use of the delegation during the Conference. Special thanks are offered to Robert Orr, High Commissioner of Canada to Tanzania and the officers and staff of the Canadian High Commission for their extremely professional assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	55 th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
DESTINATION	Arusha, Tanzania
DATES	September 28 – October 6, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Raynell Andreychuk
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Stephanie Bond
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 11,059.66
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 255.63
HOSPITALITY	\$
PER DIEMS	\$ 879.66
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 668.10
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 64.06
TOTAL	\$ 12 261,01