

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the
123rd IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Geneva, Switzerland
October 4-6, 2010**

Report

1. Background

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments of sovereign states. It was established in 1889. The Union is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it:

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;
- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights -- an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development; and
- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

The IPU supports the efforts of the United Nations, whose objectives it shares, and works in close cooperation with it. It also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

At the close of the 123rd Assembly, 155 national parliaments were members of the IPU and eight regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members. Most of these members are affiliated to one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.¹

2. Agenda for the 123rd IPU Assembly

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on political issues. Twice a year it brings together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action.

The agenda for the 123rd IPU Assembly, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland between 4 and 6 October 2010, addressed the following items:

- Panel discussions on the subject items chosen for debate during the 124th Assembly in March-April 2011:

¹ Source for this section: <http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>.

- Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power;
 - The role of parliaments in ensuring sustainable development through the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change;
 - Transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns.
- Report of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs
 - Emergency Item: Immediate action to support international relief efforts in response to natural disasters, in particular with regard to flood-stricken Pakistan

A detailed report on the 123rd IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.²

3. The Canadian Delegation

Delegations from the parliaments of 118 countries attended the 123rd IPU Assembly. Of the 1,023 delegates who attended the Assembly, 460 were members of national parliaments, of which 148 were women (32%) and six were Canadian parliamentarians. These included:

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator, Leader of the delegation
 The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C., Senator
 The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator
 The Honourable Bob Rae, P.C., M.P.
 Mr. Ed Holder, M.P.
 Mr. Robert Vincent, M.P.

4. Contributions made by the Canadian Delegation during the 123rd IPU Assembly

Canadian delegates participated in the full program of meetings and related panel sessions held during the 123rd IPU Assembly.³

During the panel discussion on “Transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns” **Mr. Vincent** said:

That the financing of political parties in Canada was currently regulated through strict legislation. Measures had been taken to limit the influence of large businesses. In 2003, legislation had been drafted to place caps on

² See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/123/123.pdf>.

³ Resolutions adopted on the occasion of the 123rd Assembly may be found at: <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/stcrfres.htm#123>.

private funding donations from businesses to political parties. To compensate for losses in private funding, the government provided funds to political parties every quarter, calculated on the basis of the number of votes received in the previous election. That system ensured greater fairness between political parties, and had been successful in preventing corruption. Each party could use its State funding freely. In 2006, a cap had been placed on private funding from individuals, thus enhancing transparency in political party funding. The Conservative Party of Canada wished to repeal legislation that restricted private funding, which would constitute a step backwards in the safeguarding of democracy.

Following the debate on the Emergency Item, which addressed “Immediate action to support international relief efforts in response to natural disasters, in particular with regard to flood-stricken Pakistan” **Mr. Rae** was appointed to the drafting committee and was named as its rapporteur. When he presented his report to the Assembly, he noted that:

The resolution refers both to the immediate and pressing needs of the flood-stricken Pakistan. That it calls for the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the flood-affected areas in Pakistan, on the understanding that one day of the proceedings will be devoted to an IPU-sponsored parliamentary meeting. It also call on all nations to create a global fund in order to immediately tackle unexpected disastrous phenomenon, and urges the IPU to establish a committee to follow this important issue and to promote and monitor the creation of such a fund.

5. Participation by Canadians in Related Meetings and Activities

Concurrent with Standing Committee activities associated with the 123rd IPU Assembly were the meetings of several related committees and working groups. This section identifies those meetings that were attended by Canadian delegates. In instances where key activities are not reported in the IPU’s official report on the 123rd IPU Assembly, further details are provided below.

a) The 187th Session of the IPU Governing Council

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Several committees and working groups are subordinated to it and report to the Council on their work. Meetings of the 187th Session of the IPU Governing Council were held on 4 and 6 October. A detailed report on the work and decisions of the Governing Council is available online.⁴ All Canadian delegates attended at least one session of the Governing Council.

⁴ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/123/123.pdf>.

b) The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

In 1976, the IPU adopted a “Procedure for the examination and treatment of communications concerning violations of the human rights of parliamentarians,” applicable to parliamentarians who are, or have been, subjected to arbitrary actions (e.g. State harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trial, violation of parliamentary immunity) during the exercise of their mandate, whether the Parliament is sitting, in recess or has been dissolved by unconstitutional or extraordinary measures.

The IPU’s Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, is comprised of five parliamentarians representing different regions of the world and is responsible for the treatment of such complaints. The Committee holds hearings and undertakes onsite missions. If it does not prove possible to reach a satisfactory settlement of the case during a first phase of confidential examination and communication with the authorities of the countries concerned, public reports and recommendations for specific measures are submitted by the Committee to the Governing Council and thus are made public.

Senator Carstairs was first elected to this committee in April 2004. The Committee meets four times a year, including on the occasion of the IPU’s statutory Assemblies.

The Committee met from 2 to 5 October.⁵ It conducted seven meetings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending and, in total, examined cases from 35 countries concerning 306 individuals. The Committee submitted to the Governing Council the cases of 118 parliamentarians in 21 countries around the world affecting individuals from the following jurisdictions: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palestine/Israel, Philippines, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

Following the Committee’s report on Myanmar, **Mr. Holder** observed:

That any of the parliamentarians present could become victims of such human rights abuses. He also expressed his delegation’s concern regarding the situation in Myanmar, in particular with regard to the parliamentarians who remained in detention and would be unable to participate in the elections.

c) Geopolitical Group Meetings

Article 25 of the Statutes and Rules of the Inter-Parliamentary Union permits members of the IPU to form geopolitical groups. These groups play an important role in the functioning and activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

There are six geopolitical groups formally recognized by the IPU: the African Group (42 members), the Arab Group (19 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (27 members), the Eurasia Group (7 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (45 members). Each group decides on working methods that best

⁵ The resolutions of public cases adopted by this committee may be found at <http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/hr-cases.htm>.

suit its participation in the activities of the Union and informs the Secretariat of its composition, the names of its officers, and its rules of procedure.

Canada belongs to the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group. Since Canada belongs to more than one geopolitical group, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the Union through the Twelve Plus Group.⁶

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) was held on 3 October. Agenda items considered included:

- Briefing by the Group's representatives on the work of the Executive Committee
- Report from ASEAN +3 Group
- Emergency Item
- Vacancies to be filled
- Nominations to drafting committees
- Comments on the IPU draft budget
- Next Chair of the Group

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 3, 5 and 6 October. Agenda items considered included:

- Report on work of the Group's Steering Committee
- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Executive Committee and its subsidiary bodies
- International Convention on the IPU
- Results of the 2010 Speakers Conference
- Emergency item
- Panel Discussions of the Standing Committees
- Appointments to drafting committees
- Positions to be filled
- Program and Budget for 2011
- Matters relating to the Twelve Plus Group
- Schedule of Group meetings for the 124th Assembly (Panama City, March/April 2010)

6. Elections

On 6 October, the IPU's Governing Council elected **Senator Oliver** as a member of the IPU Executive Committee to a term that expires in October 2014. The Council also elected **Mr. Rae** to the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus until October 2014.

⁶ Minutes of the meetings of the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group are available from the Canadian IPU Secretariat upon request.

7. Follow-up

Following each statutory IPU Assembly the Canadian IPU Group prepares this report, which is tabled in the House of Commons and the Senate. It also forwards relevant IPU reports and resolutions to parliamentary committees and government departments and sends letters to Ottawa-based diplomatic missions concerning the IPU's report and recommendations on the human rights violations of former or serving parliamentarians.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Suzanne Fortin-Duplessis, Senator
Canadian Group of the IPU

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	123rd IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
DESTINATION	Geneva, Switzerland
DATES	October 4-6, 2011
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Donald H. Oliver, Q.C. Hon. Sharon Carstairs, P.C. Hon. Dennis Dawson
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Bob Rae, P.C., M.P. Mr. Ed Holder, M.P. Mr. Robert Vincent, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier, Secretary to the Delegation Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 25,117.68
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 15,469.75
HOSPITALITY	\$ 602.09
PER DIEMS	\$ 7,043.73
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 63.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 32.63
TOTAL	\$ 48,328.88