

Canada – United Kingdom
Inter-Parliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada – Royaume-Uni

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
Bilateral Visit to the United Kingdom**

Canada–United Kingdom Interparliamentary Association

**London, United Kingdom
January 14 – 20, 2007**

Report

The delegation was led by the Hon. Bill Blaikie, PC, MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and member of the Executive Committee of the Association and included the following members of the delegation: the Hon. Charles Hubbard, PC, MP; James Rajotte, MP; Alan Tonks, MP; Raynald Blais, MP and Carol Chafe, Executive Secretary of the Association.

The purpose of the visit was to provide Canadian parliamentarians with the opportunity to discuss a variety of issues of common interest to both the Canadian Parliament and Westminster. Among the topics discussed were: bilateral issues on trade including the Doha Round of Negotiations and agricultural subsidies; Anglo-Canadian cooperation in Afghanistan; current status of the Northern Ireland peace process; issues in United Kingdom parliamentary procedure (with particular emphasis on decorum and the new system of adjournment debates in Westminster Hall); reforms in the House of Lords; climate change and, the efforts to engage the Muslim community in the aftermath of the July 2005 London Transit bombings.

The delegation arrived from Canada early on Sunday, January 14th and commenced their program with a breakfast briefing session with the Canadian High Commissioner Mr. James Wright at the Residence on the Monday morning. The session provided the High Commissioner and senior officials at the High Commission with the opportunity to provide a detailed breakdown of the program and the U.K. players who would be participating in various ways throughout the visit.

Following the briefing session, the delegation arrived at Westminster Hall to begin their program. It should be noted that as the United Kingdom has not yet organized their side of the bilateral association, the program at Westminster was organized and administered by the staff of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) U.K. Branch. Efforts had been made to ensure that the U.K. participants were those parliamentarians with a strong interest in Canadian affairs.

In addition to a program encompassing all of the elements requested by the delegates, an additional meeting had been added at the request of the U.K. participants. This meeting dealt with the potential economic impact of the continuation of the Seal Hunt in Atlantic Canada. The delegates had been advised by James Wright that he had already met with this group of parliamentarians on the topic and that he felt the individuals were seriously concerned about the potential negative impact on Canadian fisheries products exports to the United Kingdom and Europe. Messrs Eric Martlew, the Rt. Hon. Alun Michael and Elliot Morley alerted their Canadian colleagues to the groundswell of support among ordinary consumers in the U.K. to consciously avoid purchasing Canadian fisheries products until the seal hunt has ended. They noted that Westminster was not considering enacting legislation to limit importation of these products; however, the retail sector would take measures to avoid losses in inventory and just stop their purchase. There were several exchanges between the U.K. participants and the Canadian delegates who maintained a common front regarding its economic and cultural value to Canada. The session ended amicably with both sides agreeing to agree to disagree on the future of the hunt.

On Tuesday, the delegates met with the Rt. Hon. Michael Martin, Speaker of the House of Commons. Mr. Martin gave a tour of his quarters within Westminster and provided a brief and amusing history of the previous occupants of the office. During the visit, the topic of maintaining decorum in the Chamber was raised and Mr. Martin provided some of his personal experiences and techniques. The power to maintain decorum already exists within their Standing Orders and he admitted that from time to time, his hold on the decorum of the House has been tested. However, the small size of the Chamber and the limited seating combined with different rules governing conduct of question periods at Westminster results in the Speaker having more control over the proceedings than is currently the practice in the Canadian House of Commons.

The visit with the Speaker was then followed by a meeting with senior official of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat (CPA). Messrs. Andrew Imlach; Niall Johnston and Joe Omorodion provided a detailed briefing on the work of the CPA and complimented the delegates on the contributions made by the Canadian Branch to the programs in place to develop strong democratic practices and principles in emerging Commonwealth parliaments. The discussions on the future of the CPA and Canadian contributions to the work of the CPA continued over a lunch hosted by the officials at one of the many restaurants within the parliamentary precincts of Westminster.

The delegation met with members of the Environment Select Committee early in the afternoon to discuss Climate Change. During the meeting, the U.K. parliamentarians discussed in detail current and proposed legislation dealing with Climate Change issues. They emphasized that the question is no longer when major reductions in gas emissions is required, but rather "how" these reductions can be achieved. It was noted that despite knowing that reductions are required, there are still questions and differences in how these reductions can be implemented without damaging the economy. The U.K. representatives noted that the European Union has been working towards severe reductions in greenhouse gases and the United Kingdom has to comply with the legislation enacted by the European Parliament.

During the discussions, they expressed concern at the lack of leadership being shown by Canada in implementing the Kyoto Accord. One of the Canadian delegates noted that although many of the programs implemented by the previous government had been cancelled, some had demonstrated a level of effectiveness which may be reinstated by the new government. He cited the example of the retro-fitting of homes as being a good example of a program which might be reinstated in the coming months. He also mentioned the work being done in Alberta to devised mechanisms for capturing CO₂ emissions produced by the extraction of oil and gas in the tar sands.

Delegates emphasized their concerns about reducing green house gases without imposing negative impacts on Canadian industry. Some also mentioned the need for Canada to become a world leader in the development of environmentally friendly technologies. Among the technologies mentioned were the development of efficient wind farms; improved nuclear power production as well as both solar energy and biomass power generation.

This meeting was followed by another meeting with members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on the parliamentary aspects of Anglo-Canadian Cooperation in

Afghanistan. The majority of the discussions concerned individual impressions of the current situation in Afghanistan and the impact of various policies regarding the role of the Canadian and British military in establishing and maintaining security outside of Kabul and Khandahar.

There was agreement that the borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan have to be tightened to prevent the cross border movement of members of the Taliban and remnants of Al Qaeda.

Richard Younger-Ross, MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee noted that the Committee is currently studying the success of the war on terrorism and had recently visited India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He had high praise for the work of the Canadian military and NGOs, but there was also agreement that all parties have to concentrate on the construction and re-construction efforts to win over the hearts and minds of the local populations. He also mentioned the successes for the population, including the establishment of more schools for both boys and girls and, improved transportation around Kabul. It is hoped that this will start to be seen moving out from the centre to more outlying areas, providing concrete evidence of the value of the current security and military operations and reconstruction projects around the country.

Much of discussion also dealt with the impact of the programs to eradicate the opium poppy and the differences between the approaches of the United States and the European countries on the question of eradication and the problems which arise within certain areas of the country when such policies are implemented without providing alternate sources of income for the farmers.

Despite some of the military setbacks over the fall, Mr. Younger-Ross reiterated his belief that the situation in Afghanistan is winnable, but only with a consistent presence of the NATO military alliances and a plausible long term plan for re-construction of the entire country. He noted that the U.K. population is more accepting of the presence of their troops in Afghanistan over their continued presence in Iraq. His comments led to a discussion of the splits in Canadian public opinion about the presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan and the length of their commitment. Some concerns were expressed about the continued conflict in Iraq and its impact in the region and in particular, Afghanistan.

On Wednesday, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, the Hon. Don. MacKinnon, who was joined at the meeting by senior officials from the Commonwealth Secretariat. Mr. MacKinnon took the opportunity to mention the contributions of Canada throughout the Commonwealth. He noted that smaller member countries of the Commonwealth regard Canada as a friend and mentor in dealing with other larger members of the organization. He provided a series of comments on the current state of the organization and its successes in a variety of fields.

During the meeting, the subject of the Commonwealth's participation in Afghanistan was discussed. Mr. MacKinnon noted that the organization is not directly implicated in Afghanistan; however, they are playing a very active role in Pakistan with President Musharif, supporting him in maintaining and expanding the role of Parliament in the country. It is also encouraging him to take concrete actions towards separating his role

as President and Commander-in-Chief in hopes of strengthening the powers of parliament in overseeing the powers of the security agencies within Pakistan.

The question of terrorism within the Commonwealth family of nations was raised and it was noted that terrorism is not a serious problem within the Commonwealth, with the exception of the United Kingdom. This is a situation which is based on a series of special circumstances within the U.K. and its participation in the conflict in Iraq. More work is required within the U.K. to lessen the threat of home-grown terrorism.

The morning's session ended with the delegation attending the Prime Minister's Question Time. The session was a lively one and the delegates were able to observe Speaker Martin's handling of decorum on the floor of the Chamber. It was interesting for the Canadian parliamentarians to observe that in the U.K., the Prime Minister's questions can range from international issues to local transportation issues. Prime Minister's Question Time occurs once a week on Wednesday. Unlike the situation in the Canadian House of Commons, the Speaker also has a chance to determine not only the order but also the subject area of the questions to be put at Question Time.

The High Commission had ensured that the delegates would have an opportunity to meet with members of the Muslim community in the United Kingdom over lunch. Five representatives participated in an animated discussion of the current situation regarding the integration of the Muslim community into British society, the whole question of British "identity" and how Canada may well be doing a better job of establishing a universally acceptable identity than the U.K. The delegates appreciated the efforts of High Commissioner Jim Wright and his staff in ensuring such an open and frank exchange of ideas on this subject. The lunch was held at the Residence to ensure that none of the participants would feel constrained in any way by the possible presence of British parliamentarians or officials.

The delegation returned to Westminster for a series of meetings on bilateral trade issues and counter-terrorism with members of the Trade and Industry Select Committee and the Home Affairs Select Committees respectively.

There are few if any problems on the bilateral trade front, however, concerns were expressed by parliamentarians on both sides of the table regarding the impact on both countries' bilateral trade of the North American Trade Agreement and the European Common Market. The preference of the European Union (EU) to protect its members' economies through the mechanisms of high tariff levels and a series of substantial subsidy programs has a direct impact on the ability of Canadian agricultural producers to get their products into the Common Market. The counter argument is that within some countries in the EU, protection of the agricultural community is not an economic policy, but rather a social policy and it is unlikely to change in the short term.

Delegates on both sides agreed on the continuing lack of skilled labour and its long-term impact on both countries' economies. Another point discussed in detail is the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector to the growing economies in India and China, it was noted that operations are being moved offshore while the head offices are remaining in the U.K. This development is having a major impact on the youth in both countries in locating good paying jobs in a stable economy.

The members then met with the Chair and members of the Home Affairs Select Committee to discuss their studies on Counter Terrorism. The Chair, Janet Dean, MP, noted the number of reports her Committee had produced over the past few years on various aspects of counter terrorism. In the U.K. of course, this issue has been an object of study since the 1970s as a result of bombings by the IRA within London and other locations around the country. But the issue has changed as a result of September 11, 2001 and July 7, 2005 with the appearance of the “home grown” terrorist, and in particular, the growing number of young disaffected non-Muslim converts to terrorism prone versions of Islam.

Discussions concentrated on the U.K. legislation and the Canadian system of security certificates. This was followed by comments on the necessity to work with and integrate second generation Muslim youth into the British and Canadian society, in a discussion reminiscent of the delegation’s earlier meeting at the High Commissioner’s Residence. Many of the problems are directly related to the lack of employment and the need to build economies where they will be able to participate fully in society.

The following morning, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with members of the Defence Select Committee to discuss in more detail the situation in Afghanistan and the question of Anglo-Canadian Cooperation on the military side. Discussions ranged over the possibility of limits on the length of time troops will be staying in Afghanistan and the need to convince other NATO partners to take a more active role in fighting the Taliban. Both Canada and the United Kingdom have been working with their NATO counterparts to get them more in the “tooth” portion of the troop deployment. The general perception is that the U.K. troops are overstretched between their responsibilities in both Afghanistan and Iraq. It was noted that in addition to the need for other NATO participants to take a more active role in the country, there is an even stronger need for a larger degree of coordination between the participants in terms of equipment which is compatible among the partners.

The delegates were also able to follow up on the situation in Northern Ireland as this had been the focus of the Association’s last bilateral visit in 2005. During this visit, they had the opportunity to meet with the Chair, Sir Patrick Cormack, FSA, MP and members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

Sir Patrick and the other members of the Select Committee present remarked on the progress which had been made in reducing the number of stumbling blocks to a final agreement on power sharing in Northern Ireland. It was noted that the deadline for such an agreement is January 30th. Once the agreement is in place, a general election will be called and all powers with the exception of the police services will be transferred from Westminster to the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland. He also predicted that Sinn Féin was expected to win a significant number of seats in the Assembly. It was noted that the policing issue remains controversial despite the implementation of the recommendations of the Patten Commission for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

During the meeting, Sir Patrick expressed the appreciation of all parties involved in the negotiations to the many Canadians who have played an important role in moving

towards a lasting solution to the problems. He singled out retired General Jean deChastelain for special thanks in overseeing the program to disarm the militants.

Since the last visit of a Canadian parliamentary delegation to Westminster, the House of Lords has undergone several major reforms. The most notable being the change from having the Lord Chancellor serve as Speaker of the Upper Chamber to having a member of the Lords elected as Speaker. The delegates had the opportunity to meet with the first Speaker of the Lords, the Right Honourable Baroness Hayman. Elected to the position in July 2006, Baroness Hayman has been very busy implementing several other changes and in establishing an Outreach Program to educate the public on the role, functions and importance of the Lords in the British parliamentary system. This program is a direct result of the Putnam Report on Parliament which recommended making Parliament more accessible to the public. Labour governments over the past 10 years have been working towards removing the hereditary aspects of the Lords and over the coming years will have moved to a system where the Lords will no longer have any hereditary peers as members. Despite advances in reforming the Chamber, the majority of the Lords are still appointed, although there are proposals for further reforms to have a portion elected, the percentage of elected to appointed members has yet to be determined, but ranges from 20 to 80 per cent of the total.

The discussions included references to the similarities of the perceptions of the Lords and the Senate and the future composition of these upper chambers in their respective political systems. The Lords permits "cross benchers" and, as a reflection of the new appointments and election process, party affiliation and discipline has less of an impact on voting and legislation in this Chamber than in the House of Commons. This has resulted in more amendments being adopted on legislation than might have been the case in the past.

The theme of Reform of the Lords was carried into the delegates' meeting with Lord Howe of Aberavon. As a Life Peer and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Howe shared his unique perspective on reforms in the Lords. During the meeting, he spoke about the powers and lack of same for members in his Chamber. He noted that the creation of Life Peers was a major change in the composition of the Lords and that combined with the creation of the "Peoples' Peers" has led to a situation where no government will be able to have a majority in the Lords. This is having a direct impact on the way in which this Chamber deals with legislation. The addition of experts from a variety of backgrounds ranging from the law, economics to health services and education has meant that legislation is subjected to intense scrutiny in the upper chamber. In discussing the proposal to have all positions in the Lords elected, he noted that the political parties are already experiencing financial difficulty in funding the races for the House of Commons and do not expect to have additional funds available to finance elections to the Lords. There is also the question of which Chamber will have supremacy once both are elected. Delegates agreed this will be a subject for intense study as the changes become more concrete.

The delegation was also able to benefit from meetings outside of the parliamentary precincts with senior officials from Foreign and Commonwealth Office on both the question of Climate Change and Anglo-Canadian Cooperation in Afghanistan.

A meeting with John Ashton, the United Kingdom Special Representative for Climate Change and other officials, provided the delegates with more details on the legislation from the European Union and Westminster dealing with mechanisms to implement stringent reductions in greenhouse gases. Of great interest to the delegation is the EU White Paper on Climate Change which recommends a zero CO₂ level production within the EU. The plan calls for European companies to be in the forefront in establishing low carbon industries with governments providing financial assistance and strong tax incentives. Concern was expressed by Mr. Ashton at the recent decision of Canada to move away from the Kyoto Accord. He noted that he would be traveling to Canada in the coming weeks and would be meeting with senior Canadian officials to encourage them to come back to the table and implement programs directed towards meeting the Kyoto targets.

During the discussion, the government member on the delegation noted the work being undertaken in Alberta in the Tar Sands to develop environmentally friendly technologies for use in the extraction of oil from the tar sands without damaging the energy sector and the local and national economy. It is hoped that these technologies will also contribute to substantial reductions in CO₂ emissions over the coming years.

The subject of carbon credits was also discussed and the delegates were informed that by 2020, all coal fired power plants will have to be carbon neutral and include technologies for total carbon capture and storage. European governments are looking at more and more new nuclear power plant technologies which can be developed and utilized both in Europe and in the developing countries to lessen the amount of greenhouse gases produced in these regions. Work is also underway in European government to develop tax incentive programs for the development of more efficient carbon capture and storage technologies. It is felt that such programs will put European industry at the forefront and provide their companies with a competitive edge in the worldwide market place.

This meeting was followed by a meeting with the Head of the Afghanistan Group at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Richard Codrington. He was joined by Peter Holland, another senior official at the FCO working on Afghanistan. The emphasis in this meeting was placed on the impact of the poppy eradication program in the south of the country. It was noted that there is a direct linkage between the degree of security in a province and the level of poppy production. Efforts by the United States and the United Kingdom to eradicate poppy production are having a direct impact on the security situation in the south of the country. It was noted again, that in order to be successful on all levels, this program must be implemented in conjunction with other programs providing the poppy farmers with other crops and sources of income.

Both officers noted the close cooperation between the Canadian and British troops supported by the Dutch military in trying to re-establish a stable level of security throughout the country. It was noted that British troops are anticipated to remain in Afghanistan for several years following the current commitment to pull out in three years.

In conclusion, the members of the delegation wish to thank Canada's representatives at the Canadian High Commission to the United Kingdom, most particularly, High

Commissioner Jim Wright, who generously provided a reception for the delegation with members of the Canadian community in London and Mr. Ron Hoffman, Mr. Gordon Morrison and Ms Gillian Licari who were always available to accompany the delegation throughout its stay and provided welcome and sage advice.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. William Blaikie, PC, MP
Leader of the delegation,
Canada–United Kingdom Interparliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada–United Kingdom Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to the United Kingdom
DESTINATION	London, United Kingdom
DATES	January 14-20, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Bill Blaikie, PC, MP Hon. Charles Hubbard, PC, MP James Rajotte, MP Alan Tonks, MP Raynald Blais, MP
STAFF	Carol Chafe, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 14,511.34
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 12,856.54
HOSPITALITY	\$
PER DIEMS	\$ 4,516.67
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 467.45
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 191.88
TOTAL	\$ 32,543.88