

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the 116th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia
29 April – 4 May 2007

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Organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. Background¹

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 116th Assembly 147 national parliaments were members of the IPU and seven regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members. Most members are affiliated to one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

2. Agenda for the 116th 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 116th IPU Assembly, which took place in Nusa Dua, Bali (Indonesia) between 29 April and 4 May 2007, addressed the following items:

- General Debate: General debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world with the overall theme of Global warming: ten years after Kyoto;

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

- First Standing Committee: Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world;
- Second Standing Committee: Job creation and employment security in the era of globalization;
- Third Standing Committee: Promoting diversity and equal rights for all through universal democratic and electoral standards; and
- Emergency Item: International cooperation to combat terrorism, its root causes and its financing, including cross-border funding.

A detailed report on the 116th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.²

3. The Canadian Delegation

Delegations from the parliaments of 111 countries attended the 116th Assembly. Of the 1,148 delegates who attended, 588 were members of national parliaments, of which 156 were women (28.2%) and nine 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 Mac Harb, Senator

The Honourable Sue Barnes, P.C., M.P.

Mr. Ted Menzies, M.P. and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation

Ms. France Bonsant, M.P.

Mr. Blaine Calkins, M.P.

Mr. Mario Silva, M.P.

4. Contributions made by the Canadian Delegation to the 116th IPU Assembly

Canadian delegates were active and engaged participants in all Assembly and Standing Committee activities held during and in association with the 116th IPU Assembly.³

During the General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, **Senator Oliver** focused on the overall theme of theme of Global warming: ten years after Kyoto. He said:

² See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/116/116.pdf>.

³ Resolutions adopted by the Standing Committees that met on the occasion of the 116th Assembly may be found at: <http://www.ipu.org/strect-e/stcnfres.htm#116>.

That he was honoured to participate in the discussions on global warming ten years after Kyoto. He would concentrate on the action Canada had taken to improve accountability on the environment, because strong and accountable governance would lead to meaningful progress on climate change.

Canada had passed a Federal Accountability Act in 2006, which was greeted by many Canadian commentators as a profoundly important step in moving the country towards a new era of openness, transparency and accountability. A government's right to govern was legitimized by its accountability: parliament had to answer to the people. Holding the government to account could serve three purposes: a control against the abuse or misuse of power, provide assurance that activities had been carried out as intended, and encourage improved performance of programmes. The vital issue of climate change required parliament to hold a government to account for setting clear, concrete and reasonable plans and making progress towards achieving its goals – even though environmental improvement and sustainable development were not easy to measure. There was often unwillingness by government departments to provide meaningful information. Canada had attempted to provide more information and improve its environmental audits. The post of commissioner on the environment and sustainable development had been created, with a view to assembling a critical mass of expertise in environment auditing. In addition, government departments had been obliged to establish sustainable development strategies and update them every three years.

Another accountability mechanism was the right of any citizen to send a petition to the commissioner about an environmental matter. The commissioner had to forward the petition to the appropriate minister within 15 days and the minister had 121 days to respond. The commissioner monitored responses to ensure that petitions were answered appropriately and in a timely fashion.

The audit process covered the extent to which the Canadian Government honoured its international obligations and commitments – for example, managing the federal approach to climate change. Canada had fallen behind in its attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and high among the reasons for that was the lack of accountability.

There could be no silver bullets to reduce greenhouse emissions, but many sectors, including consumers, had significant roles to play, and the federal Government's response also involved many departments. However, the audit process had found that there was currently no effective structure for managing climate change activities.

Governments had been increasingly involved in environmental regulation. Public and private sectors, including financial institutions, were becoming more aware of the costs and risks involved in environmental degradation. It was imperative to retain accountability on the part of the government so that limited resources were rightly assigned to ensure improvements to the environment and to promote sustainable development policy. Transparency and accountability would not, in

and of themselves, lead to environmental improvements, but without them government policies would be far less effective and more likely to fail.

Senator Harb and **Mr. Calkins** attended meetings of the First Standing Committee (Peace and International Security). During the debate on “Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world” **Senator Harb** said:

That human rights were enshrined in a number of international instruments. The responsibility of authorities should not be interpreted as a carte blanche for authoritarian regimes to curtail human rights. Beliefs should be included in the concept of freedom of religion, since some people might have certain beliefs, yet not belong to a specific religion. Freedom of religion or belief was a fundamental freedom enjoyed by citizens, not by religions.

Canada had a solid legal framework that supported the rights and freedoms of individuals and protected them from all forms of discrimination. Canadians were free to follow the religion of their choice, and were guaranteed freedom of thought, belief and expression. Since the media played an important role in promoting freedom of religion and belief, the freedom of the press and other media to speak out was also protected under Canadian legislation. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and to belong to associations such as trade unions were also protected. Those freedoms were set out in Canadian legislation to ensure that Canadians were free to come together and discuss their ideas and to make those ideas known to others. Such activities were basic manifestations of individual liberties and were fundamental to the success of a democratic society.

While Canada fully supported the importance and need for cultural diversity, it was not of the view that such diversity should be in lieu of respect for human rights. Human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent, and were fundamental obligations on States, which should not simply be invoked when convenient. Canada had taken a consistent stand in international forums on the need to apply all international instruments at the national level, in particular the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Canada was a co-sponsor of the United Nations resolution on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance, and had submitted a number of draft amendments to the draft resolution.

That the present meeting and the forthcoming United Nations Small Arms Review Conference were particularly important in the global fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). The First Standing Committee should ensure that the resolutions it adopted responded effectively to the needs of its members, and that all members were encouraged to implement those resolutions at the national level. Parliamentarians had a crucial role to play in the national implementation of measures adopted at the international level. His delegation wished to see the establishment of an ad hoc group of countries to meet twice a year, in order to keep the fight against trafficking in SALW high on the international agenda.

Senator Harb also served as a member of the Drafting Committee for the First Standing Committee. In this capacity, he attended a daylong meeting on 1 May.

Senator Dawson, Mr. Menzies and Mme. Bonsant attended meetings of the Second Standing Committee (Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade). During the debate on “Job creation and employment security in the era of globalization” **Mr. Menzies** said:

That said that a positive outcome to the trade talks under way at the World Trade Organization (WTO), of which Canada was a strong supporter, would additionally provide otherwise non-existent job opportunities for developing countries. For economies that were knowledge-based and technologically driven, globalization presented not only challenges but opportunities. In that context, he applauded the forward-looking attitude of such countries as India and China in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by market opening, which improved incomes, created jobs and increased the flow of goods and services. The flow of finances served to guard against money concentration and was essential to employment and the flow of labour. Despite a consistently high job-growth rate and a highly adaptable workforce, Canada had one of the largest labour shortages worldwide, which it aimed to tackle through a new initiative in which jobs were offered to immigrants from around the globe. Today’s world was now so interconnected that national decisions had a universal impact. It was therefore important to ensure that parliamentary decisions did not cause labour hardships in developing countries by inadvertently shifting labour markets as a result of short-sighted protectionism or put lives at risk by negatively affecting the environment in those countries.

For her part, **Mme. Bonsant** said:

That poverty could not be discussed without also discussing women’s education, which in turn required a discussion of religious and cultural discrimination. All females should have access to equal education in the interests of eradicating poverty and prostitution, not to mention the achievement of sustainable development. It was similarly impossible to discuss wage equality unless women were entitled to hold senior positions of leadership. Nor could gender equality be discussed if women lacked access to political decision-making. In short, she hoped that the welcome words that she had heard during the discussion would soon be turned into concrete action.

Senator Dawson, Ms. Barnes and Mme. Bonsant attended meetings of the Third Standing Committee (Democracy and Human Rights). During the debate on “Promoting diversity and equal rights for all through universal democratic and electoral standards” **Ms. Barnes** said:

That Canada had a long tradition of promoting diversity and equality, which was the result of democratic tradition. Canada’s mixed linguistic, political and judicial backgrounds, and its geographical proximity to the United States of America had resulted in strong democratic institutions based on freedom and diversity. In 1960 a Charter of Rights had been adopted, which had aimed to protect Canada’s traditional values. It had been considered insufficient, and had later been

amended and incorporated into the Constitution in 1982. The Charter of Rights had guaranteed the rights of linguistic minorities, as well as equality for all Canadians. The same sex marriage legislation that had been adopted in Canada would probably not have been passed had the Charter not been in place. Government policy had resulted in greater diversity through the official promotion of multiculturalism. Promotion of diversity and equal rights was encouraged and sustained through institutions.

Canada's efforts to promote democracy abroad encompassed measures that aimed to achieve a broader consensus at the regional and international levels in respect of democratic norms, and to facilitate reform in the countries concerned by working with local actors to bring about democratic change. At the national level, in order to encourage all people to exercise their right to vote, the organization Elections Canada had undertaken specific initiatives to encourage the participation of ethno-cultural minorities, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities. In the 2006 elections those outreach activities included messages in 25 languages in ethno-cultural newspapers, the hiring of outreach officers to distribute information about registration and voting, and the hiring of poll officials who spoke the languages used in those communities. The Aboriginal peoples in Canada had much lower participation rates than the general population. Elections Canada had targeted those communities with activities to educate them about voting and to work with Elders and youth to encourage them to participate in elections. Canadian parliamentarians represented a wide variety of backgrounds and many ethnic and cultural communities. Efforts were ongoing to ensure that the Parliament was increasingly representative of the Canadian people.

Senator Dawson attended a Panel Discussion entitled "Global warming: Ten years after Kyoto." During the debate on this item he said:

That he understood the practical reasons why the IPU could not adopt a resolution, but that it needed to take a strong stand and raise public awareness of global warming. If parliamentarians did not fulfil their responsibilities, it would be hard to expect governments to do so as their political vision had often got in the way of taking action. There needed to be a communications strategy.

Many parliamentarians had referred to Al Gore's book and film *An Inconvenient Truth*, which had shown that if countries did not deal with climate change, the economic impact would be considerable.

One parliamentarian from Finland had said that each country should consider what could be done locally to tackle global warming. "Local" was not an appropriate word for Canada. Its vastness meant that travel was not a luxury because people had to fly to get around, so they would plant a lot of trees – in a country that already had a lot of trees.

It had been important to reach a consensus on a declaration because it was an issue that did not respect borders, just as the environment did not recognize any borders. All countries had neighbours and Canada needed to build bridges with its neighbour and in particular with the new US Congress. All parliamentarians

needed to play a full role in raising public awareness, whether they be from the North or the South, or from left or right. They all had to work together as a community.

5. Participation by Canadian Delegates in Related Meetings and Other Activities

Concurrent with Standing Committee activities associated with the 116th IPU Assembly were the meetings of a number of 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 116th IPU Assembly, further details are provided below.

1. The IPU Governing Council

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. A number of committees and working groups are subordinated to it and report to the Council on their work. All members of the Canadian delegation attended at least one of the two meetings of the Governing Council that were held on 30 April and May 4.

During the Council's consideration of the IPU's Financial results for 2006, **Senator Oliver**, in his capacity as the internal auditor for the IPU Financial results for 2006, presented a report written in collaboration with Mr. A. Quawas (Jordan), in which they reported that they were satisfied with the financial performance of the IPU in 2006 and with the presentation of the Financial Statements. They recommended that the Financial Regulations be amended to limit transfers between budget headings, suggested that new reporting standards be adopted for staff benefits, established a deadline for publishing an internal finance manual, and encouraged the Governing Council to consider appointing a salaried internal auditor.⁴

2. Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Since 1986, meetings of women parliamentarians have been held on the eve of IPU Assemblies, to discuss strategies and perspectives. In April 1990, the role, objectives and working methods of the Meetings of Women Parliamentarians were formally established and the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, a permanent structure, was established to coordinate its activities and ensure continuity.

Ms. Barnes and **Mme. Bonsant** attended the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians on 29 April. During a debate on "Women in Politics" Ms. Barnes observed:

That it was regrettable that there were so few women in politics in Canada. Women should be encouraged to take part but unfortunately women did not perceive the need and had no desire to take special measures. They had believed themselves equal because of their equal education with men. She said that tax incentives should be introduced to

⁴ Source for this paragraph: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/116/116.pdf>, page 11.

persuade political parties in Canada to adopt quotas for women. The carrot approach has not worked and it was therefore time for the sticks.

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

The Committee met from 29 April to 3 May.⁵ The Committee conducted 11 hearings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending and with representatives of the sources. The Committee examined a total of 57 cases in 28 countries. The Committee submitted to the Governing Council 35 cases of 126 parliamentarians in 18 countries around the world affecting individuals from the following jurisdictions: Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Honduras, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine / Israel, Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

4. 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 (39 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (26 members), the Arab Group (15 members), the Eurasia Group (7 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (44 members). Each group decides on

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

working methods that best 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 was held on 29 April. **Mr. Calkins** and **Mr. Menzies** attended this meeting.

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 28 April and 1, 3 and 4 May. All Canadian delegates attended at least one meeting of the Twelve Plus Group. Agenda items considered included:

- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Executive Committee and its subsidiary bodies
- Evaluation of IPU reform
- Emergency item
- Reports and draft resolutions of Standing Committees
- Appointments to drafting committees
- Positions to be filled
- Panel discussions
- Matters relating to the Twelve Plus group
- Schedule of Group meetings for the 115th Assembly (Geneva, October 16 to 18, 2006)

The most important decisions of consequence to the Canadian IPU delegation occurred 29 April, when Canada (represented by **Senator Harb**) was nominated to serve on the drafting committee for the First Standing Committee studying “Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world” and on 1 May, when Canada (represented by **Mr. Silva**) was nominated to serve on the drafting committee for the Emergency Item entitled: “International cooperation to combat terrorism, its root causes and its financing, including cross-border funding.”

5. The Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy

The Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy was established in 2003 a means to mobilize outside funding sources to support certain elements of the IPU’s democracy-related work. The Foundation’s Board met on 3 May with its

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

President, **Senator Oliver**, in the chair, at which time it was agreed to transfer the Presidency of the Foundation to Mr. Grant Chapman (Australia).

6. Field Visit to Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara Province

Ms. Barnes took part in a field visit to Lombok Island on May 1 to see community based health projects sponsored by UNICEF and other NGOs. The program for the trip included visits to:

- a. Posyandu Seroja, a community-based health post which conducts a monthly weighing of children under five years old and provides basic health services for children and child-bearing age women;
- b. the Women's and Children's Desk at the Provincial Police Office, a special service charged with offering child-friendly and gender sensitive services for women and children victims of violence; and
- c. the Child Protection Body of the Province, a unit that carries out numerous activities to eliminate abuse, violence and exploitation against children

6. Follow-up

The IPU 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. In recent years the Union has solidified its role as the lead organization through which parliamentarians may promote and debate issues of global importance to civil society and has significantly strengthened its working relationship with the United Nations.

The 116th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings was a constructive exercise, during which its participants were able to focus on and debate issues of importance to the structure, functioning and composition of the IPU. It was also an occasion during which resolutions addressing important social, cultural and economic issues were debated and adopted.

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 Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator
President, Canadian Group IPU

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	116th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
DESTINATION	Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia
DATES	29 April – 4 May 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. Donald H. Oliver, Q.C. Hon. Sharon Carstairs, P.C. Hon. Dennis Dawson Hon. Mac Harb
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Sue Barnes, C.P., M.P. Ms. France Bonsant, M.P. Mr. Blaine Calkins, M.P. Mr. Ted Menzies, M.P. Mr. Mario Silva, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Jacques Maziade, Secretary to the Delegation Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor Ms. Julie Cool, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$95,642.55
ACCOMMODATION	\$21,333.92
HOSPITALITY	\$ 482.73
PER DIEMS	\$ 5,714.82
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 430.69
TOTAL	\$123,604.71