



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding
the Bilateral Visit to the Caribbean**

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

**St. George, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and
Road Town Tortola, British Virgin Islands**

April 21 – 26, 2014

Report

A delegation of the Federal Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) visited Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the British Virgin Islands (BVI) from April 21 to 26, 2014. The Canadian Branch was represented by the following delegation:

- Mr. Devinder Shory, MP, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch, leader of the delegation;
- Ms. Isabelle Morin, MP.

The delegation was assisted by Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The objectives of the visit to the Caribbean are based on the Caribbean Initiative, a project launched by the CPA Federal Branch and endorsed by all provinces and territories across Canada. The project aims to provide a framework that allows the legislatures of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to establish working relationships with legislatures in the Commonwealth Caribbean, along the lines of those undertaken between the Australian and the Pacific regions of CPA. The purpose of the project is to increase cooperation between parliaments, including the sharing of ideas and best practices. The specific purpose of the delegation's bilateral visit was to seek the permission of the legislatures of Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the British Virgin Islands to participate in the twinning initiative. It should be noted that the CPA had sought the permission of the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom to include the overseas territories in the project, thereby allowing for an inclusion of the BVI in the bilateral visit.

A. Meeting with the Houses of Parliament, Grenada:

The House of Representatives has 16 members: 15 elected for a five-year term in single-seat constituencies and a Speaker. The elections are by the first-past-the-post system. The Senate has 13 appointed members.

The delegation members met with the President of the Senate, Dr. Lawrence Joseph and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Honourable Michael Pierre. During the meeting, Mr. Shory explained the purpose and intent of the Caribbean twinning initiative. He explained that the central idea is to "twin" the legislatures of each Canadian province with one (or more) of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries to encourage a greater sharing of knowledge and experience. This would be patterned

after the very successful “twinning” initiative that Australia launched with eight Pacific Island states in 1997.

Canada’s long-standing relationship with the Commonwealth Caribbean has made the twinning initiative an ideal model for provinces and the Caribbean Commonwealth. It has strong trading and investment relations with the region, more than half a million people of Caribbean origin live in Canada, and Canada represents the Commonwealth Caribbean countries in its constituencies at the IMF and World Bank. The initiative sends an important and timely message on Canada’s strong and continuing engagement with the Commonwealth.

Mr. Shory then explained the role of the Federal Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), in looking to organize and monitor the various twinning relationships established between the Caribbean countries and the provinces and territories across Canada, all the while providing advice and assistance on any matter that would be considered a federal jurisdiction.

Both the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives expressed their support for the project and their willingness to participate.

B. Grenada Schools Nutrition Study in conjunction with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and St. George`s University:

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with IDRC representatives as well as school children from Grenada who were participating in a study to reduce obesity among adolescents. The project identified the modifiable factors in secondary schools and neighborhood environments that are associated with different rates of overweight and obesity among adolescents in Grenada, with the overall aim to influence policies to improve these environments. IDRC has funded this project in conjunction with Windward Islands Research & Education Foundation (WINDREF), Grenada in the amount of 300,000\$ CAD.

C. University of the West Indies (UWI) – Open Campus, Grenada:

The delegation had the opportunity to visit the UWI campus to learn first-hand of the investment given by the Government of Canada of 19 million\$ CAD to provide improvement to online course access across the West Indies.

The course, which lasts for a ten week period, has as its goal to enhance the professional development of the students, making them more marketable, allowing for promotions, for job creation, improved customer service, and supervisory management opportunities. The course has enrolled 340 students on-line and 98 in the classroom. All are working adults, with some private companies paying for their tuition. This course

opportunity allows for those already in the workforce to obtain a degree while continuing to work. This program allows for the development of an enhanced relationship between the academic environment and the workplace across the West Indies for all those who wish to improve their skills while continuing to be employed.

D. Visit to De La Grenade Spice Garden and Food Processing Operation

The delegation visited De La Grenade Industries, a leading Food Processing Company of nutmeg pericarp (fruit) producing jams, jellies and syrup. The company distributes the products on the local market and exports regionally and internationally. While visiting the Spice Garden, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with the Governor General of Grenada, Her Excellency Dame Cécile Ellen Fleurette La Grenade, and had the opportunity to explain the Twinning Initiative, which was endorsed by the Governor General.

E. Meeting with Simon Wall, Director of Business Development, Canadian Bank Note:

Mr. Wall, a Canadian living in Grenada, indicated that Canadian Bank Note has had offices in the Caribbean for over 30 years. Its mandate is to be the technological leader in fraud prevention by using secure documents and systems. It produces superior, secure documents, software systems, and hardware devices that will stop document fraud and related criminal activity. Its business is therefore based on the production of national identification papers, birth certificates, lottery documents, customs tracking and e-passports, postage stamps, residency cards. It is a big social contributor, having been a sponsor of the Grenada Triathlon.

F. Meeting with the Speaker and Clerk of the House of Assembly, Grenadine House – St. Vincent and the Grenadines:

The House of Assembly of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a unicameral legislature that serves as the legislative body for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The House has a total of 23 members, 15 represent single member constituencies and are elected using the first past the post system. Six are Senators, and appointed by the Governor General. Four senators are appointed to represent the government and two to represent the opposition. The remaining two are the Attorney-General, who is appointed, and the Speaker, who is elected by the government members of the House, in consultation with the Opposition.

In meeting with the Speaker, Mr. Henrick Alexander and the Clerk of the House of Assembly, Mrs. Nicole Herbert, the Delegation Leader, Mr. Shory, discussed the purpose of the Caribbean Twinning Initiative, and received a most favourable response,

confirming that the House of Assembly would be most pleased to participate in any upcoming activities.

G. Discussion of the CARICOM Education for Employment (C-EFE) Project, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College:

The Government of Canada is supporting the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (AUCC) to develop programming at campuses across the Caribbean in conjunction with the Universities of Guelph and Dalhousie. The investment totals 20 million \$ CAD.

The project aims to contribute to economic growth by training a more competitive, productive and gender-equitable workforce in the Caribbean. It aims to strengthen Caribbean institutional capacity by offering a more decentralized and entrepreneurial approach to college management, resulting in increased and more meaningful employment graduates and skilled workers in the region.

The program offers 15 programs in diverse areas, namely, in construction, mechanical engineering, auto repairs, electrical, plumbing computer repairs, culinary arts, hospitality and agriculture. There are 700 students enrolled in the program across the Caribbean, with 300 being women.

H. Visit to the British Virgin Island House of Assembly:

The House of Assembly of the British Virgin Islands, which until 2007 was known as the Legislative Council, has 15 members; 13 directly elected for four year terms—nine in single-seat constituencies and four "at large"—one ex officio member and one Speaker chosen from outside the House. The first Assembly followed the fifteenth Legislature. The Hon. Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe was elected Speaker of the House on 14 September 2007.

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with the Speaker as well as several members, namely the Honourable Marlon Penn, the Honourable Archibald Christian, Hon. Alvera Maduro-Caines, and the Clerk of the House of Assembly, Phyllis Evans, to discuss the aims and objective of the Caribbean twinning Initiative, with the view of seeking an endorsement from all members assembled. Mr. Shory began by stating that the Federal Branch of the CPA had sought the permission of the Foreign office in the United Kingdom to include the Overseas Territories (OT) in the twinning initiative. The BVI was the first OT destination for the CPA given the particular interest that the BVI has expressed in the twinning initiative and its ongoing participation in both Canadian regional and federal CPA activities, given its participation in the annual Canadian Seminar and attendance at the regional conferences in Edmonton, Alberta and Quebec City, Quebec. All those assembled unanimously agreed to participate.

I. Meeting with Andrew Dimbleby, Head of the Governor's Office, Foreign Office, United Kingdom and Mr. Elton Georges, Acting Governor:

The delegation met with the Acting Governor, Mr. Elton Georges and the Head of the Governor's office, Andrew Dimbleby of the Foreign Office, United Kingdom. Both were delighted to hear that the Federal Branch of the CPA had approached the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom. Mr. Shory also explained that recent discussions with partners indicate that legislative delays in many Commonwealth Caribbean countries are often associated with inadequate legislative drafting skills. With the twinning initiative, the Canadian Parliament along with the provinces and territories could work with their resident experts to provide a practical training on the key conventions of legislative drafting to all Caribbean Commonwealth countries.

J Meeting with the Department of Disaster Management of the British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands as with the entire Caribbean is susceptible to natural disasters such as tropical storms, hurricanes, earthquakes and resulting tsunamis as well as oil spills, landslides, flash flooding and terrorism. As a result, the entire Caribbean region, through CARICOM and its 18 member countries are all coordinated in an effort to ensure that all member states have in place the necessary plans to ensure consistent emergency preparedness across the region. This disaster management department administers the components of the Disaster Management Program, which consists of mitigation and planning, training and research, community preparedness, public information, emergency telecommunications and recovery coordination. Under the component of mitigation and planning, assessments of various hazards are made to provide the public sector with the ability to develop appropriate mitigation strategies. Disaster management is incorporated into the curriculum at primary and secondary level and a Disaster Management Program has been incorporated into the course curriculum at the local community college. Early warning systems include an emergency broadcast system, linked to all radio and television stations, an outdoor warning siren completed in 2004, and an emergency telecommunications network. Public libraries and educational institutions also have disaster related information on display. Canada has been working to assist in streamlining disaster management across the region, and has provided funding to the University of the West Indies for this purpose.

In closing, the delegation would like to thank particularly those whose contributions led to a most successful outcome and in particular, High Commissioner Richard Hanley and Debbie Desrosiers from the Canadian High Commission in Bridgetown, Barbados. The delegation would also like to thank representatives from DFATD and the Library of Parliament who assisted in the preparation of the necessary briefing materials.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Joe Preston, M.P.

Chair

Federal Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to the Caribbean
DESTINATION	St. George, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Road Town Tortola, British Virgin Islands
DATES	April 21-26, 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Devinder Shory, MP Ms. Isabelle Morin, MP
STAFF	Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$4,339.55
ACCOMMODATION	\$3,728.10
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$1,908.92
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,315.86
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$453.43
TOTAL	\$11,745.86