



COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA)

55th PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR AT WESTMINSTER PALACE

London, England

March 6 to 17, 2006

James Bezan, MP, represented the Canadian (Federal) Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) at the 55th Parliamentary Seminar at Westminster Palace, London, England from March 6-17, 2006 and pursuant to standing order 34(1), has the honour of presenting the following report.

Report

I had the great pleasure of representing the House of Commons and the CPA Canadian Branch at the 55th Parliamentary Seminar hosted by the CPA UK Branch. Provincial Canadian representative was Mr. Leroy Johnson, MLA from the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

In total there were 34 participants representing 29 member countries and protectorate Commonwealth regions, who were a mix of federal and provincial elected members of their respective legislatures.

The two week seminar was primarily carried out at Westminster Palace, with a few excursions around London and a field trip to Canterbury. The aim of the seminar was focused on newly elected parliamentarians and providing them with a forum at Westminster to discuss comparative parliamentary procedures and best practices in Commonwealth Legislatures.

All forum participants were familiarized with the parliamentary practices and procedures at Westminster. Seminar presentations on "The Parliamentary Scene at Westminster", "Parliamentary Questions and Motions", "The Speaker's Role in Parliament", "The Legislative Process" and the "Role of the Leader of the House" highlighted the Westminster model of parliament. It was interesting to note the foundation of the Canadian parliamentary practice in the Westminster model, although both parliaments have evolved separately and many practices have diverged, either by one or the other maintaining tradition or adapting to modern times. This was further emphasized during our visit to Prime Minister's Question Time in the House of Commons and later to the House of Lords.

As predominantly newly elected members, participants also appreciated the presentations that were given by British Parliamentarians. Topics on "The Political Scene At Westminster", "Party Discipline and Communication Between Parties", "A New Member's View of Westminster" and "The UK and The Commonwealth", allowed British MPs and Lords to explain their system and comment on how they have adapted to their careers.

The seminar also provided a number of opportunities to allow delegates to interact and exchange views with members from the attending Commonwealth legislatures. Issues discussed were WTO talks, role of the Commonwealth, relevance of the upper house, African nation foreign debt load, AIDS, Commonwealth peace process and Commonwealth activism. It was suggested that in the future more opportunities be given to allow for more official exchanges, although it was noted that there were many good discussions outside of the official seminar which was attributed to the great camaraderie that existed between participants.

Participants also found the topics on "The Role of Policy Think-Tanks In Influencing Government", "The Need to Integrate Disaster Reduction Policies", and "Parliament, Government and the Media" as very informative. A great deal of discussion ensued following these presentations.

One of the goals of the UK Branch of CPA is to allow the participants to visit a region outside of London. We were fortunate to go to Canterbury. Local politicians at both the federal and municipal level spoke to us about how business was conducted at the constituency level. It was interesting to note that their municipal politicians were divided along party line. This is not true for all municipalities, but the city and county of Canterbury had merged into one council and with over 50 counselors representing about 110,000 people, they felt it necessary to campaign and govern in a party system. Without provincial type governments in England, municipalities and the federal government divide up the policy and jurisdictional areas that would be done in Canada by the provinces.

While in Canterbury we toured the beautiful Canterbury Cathedral which is inspiring from a spiritual and architectural basis considering it's almost 1000 years of history, as well as its influence on the Anglican Church. We also visited the local theatre and the old city street market.

It was also a great honour to be in London for the celebration of Commonwealth Day on March 13th which was held in Westminster Abbey, another incredible cathedral. We were in attendance with HRH the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. Following the service at Westminster Abbey we were invited to the Commonwealth Day Reception at Marlborough House again in the presence of Prince Charles. While in London the group was also guests at No. 10 Downing Street, Speaker's House in Westminster Palace, and on board the MV Silver Dolphin.

At the end of the seminar, I was given the privilege to thank our hosts, the CPA UK Branch, on behalf of all of the participants. Again I wish to reiterate the sincere gratitude that all participants had for the CPA UK Branch staff, executive members, and branch members, as well as the excellent caliber of the presenters. We thoroughly enjoyed their hospitality and also appreciated their commitment to detail. I shared how all of the participants were great ambassadors for their respective countries and how everyone benefited from the professional development. Collectively, we increased our knowledge of our shared history and culture. Everyone went home knowing that as individuals, and as members of the Commonwealth, that we belong to one of the greatest organizations in the world and tremendously enjoy and benefit in its fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Russ Hiebert, M.P.

Chair for

Mr. James Bezan, M.P.

Canadian (Federal) Branch

of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Canadian Branch
ACTIVITY	55th Parliamentary Semina
DESTINATION	London (U.K.)
DATES	March 6 to 17, 2006
NAMES OF SENATORS	
NAMES OF MEMBERS	Mr. James Bezan, MP
NAMES OF STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$6,115.85
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0
HOSPITALITY	\$0
PER DIEMS	\$ 462.86
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$0
TOTAL	\$ 6,578.71