



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the
63rd Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice
and Procedure**

**Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

London, United Kingdom

June 16 to 20, 2014

Report

Participants: 80 representatives from 35 Commonwealth legislatures were represented: Australia, Bangladesh, Bermuda, Canada, Falkland Islands, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, St Helena, St Lucia, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Zambia, EALA, and ECOWAS.

Aim:

To enhance the capacity of the delegates to work more effectively in their respective legislatures. Newly elected MPs are especially sought after.

Objectives:

To explore through briefing, discussion sessions and practical observations:-

- the role of Parliament in holding the Executive to account
- the role of opposition parties and cross party relations
- Party discipline and transparency
- the role of second chamber and bicameralism
- the relationship between Parliament and the media
- representation and the role of the MP in the constituency
- standards, privileges and accountability.
- the management and administration of Parliament including the work of the Speaker/Presiding Officer, the Commission and Members' services.

Session 1: Introduction to the UK Parliament

Diane Abbott (Labour MP) and Crispin Poyser (Clerk of the Overseas Office, House of Commons) hosted this session. An introduction to the Westminster system, delegates posed many questions regarding their experience, and how they would apply in a UK context. Delegates were reassured that the Executive is kept in check, with individual MPs expected to hold government to account, even MPs sitting on the government side of the House. Our colleagues in Canada would be encouraged to review the briefing notes of this seminar. The full report can be found here: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/bicameral/cpa-home/programmes/seminars/westminster-seminar-2014/>

Session 2: Parliamentary Administration and Governance

Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst (Conservative MP), David Beamish (Clerk of the Parliaments, house of Lords) and Sir Robert Rogers KCB (Clerk of the House of Commons) hosted this session. Discussion centered on how parliaments administer themselves. In the Canadian House of Commons' case, we have created by statute the Board of Internal Economy. Much discussion centered on the recent UK's experience at a more transparent body. As a sitting member of our Board of Internal Economy, this discussion was an especially helpful session.

Session 3: Role of the Speaker

Hosted by Nigel Evans (Conservative MP), Rt Hon John Bercow (Speaker of the Houser of Commons) and Rt Hon Baroness D'Souza CMG (Lord Speaker), the distinctions between the role of Speakers in the UK House of Commons and the UK House of Lords started the discussion. Delegates all had much to say regarding their experiences with their respective speakers.

Session 4: The Commonwealth Today

Hosted by Henry Bellingham (Conservative MP), Amitav Benerji (Commonwealth Secretariat), Rt Hon Hugo Swire (Conservative MP) and Andrew Tuggey DL (CPA UK), discussion focused on the success of the recently adopted Commonwealth Charter, and the role of the Commonwealth to enliven trade, enhance human rights, and the role of the CPA to facilitate related exchanges.

Session 5: The Legislative Process

Hosted by Rt Hon Elfyn Llwyd MP (Plaid Cynru), Kate Emms (Clerk of PMBs, HoC), Rt Hon Frank Field (Labour MP), and Jacqy Sharpe (Clerk of Legislation HoC), the steps required to draft and adopt Private Members' Bills was compared. The Canadian system compared well to the other parliaments.

Session 6: Parliamentary Information Services

Hosted by Lord Chidgey (Liberal Democrat), Tracey Green (Head of Parliamentary Web and Intranet Services, HoC), John Pullinger (Director General, Information Services HoC), various strategies for improving information services for members, as well as improving access of our work to the general public were discussed.

Section 7: The Role of an MP

Hosted by Roberta Blackman-Woods (Labour MP) and Andrew Stephenson (Conservative MP), discussions focused on the delegates sharing their challenges and successes regarding representing their constituents, and the various demands that are placed upon them. This discussion was the best at drawing a good picture of the various cultural differences and the consequent impact on the expectations placed on MPs in various countries.

Session 8: The Role of the Opposition

Hosted by Rt Hon Lord Grocott (Labour) and Rt Hon Caroline Spelman (Conservative MP), the role of the Opposition to hold government to account was discussed.

Session 9: The Role of the Leader of the House

Hosted by Rt Hon David Hanson (Labour MP), Thomas Docherty (Labour MP and deputy opposition House Leader), and Rt Hon Andrew Lansley (Conservative MP and House Leader), the role of House Leader was discussed. The distinction between the Whip and the House Leader was highlighted. As I have the honour of being the Opposition Deputy House Leader in our Parliament, I found this discussion particularly helpful.

Session 10: Party Discipline in Parliament

Hosted by Rt Hon Don Foster (Liberal Democrat and the UK coalition government's deputy whip), Rt Hon Rosie Winterton (Labour MP and opposition whip) and Rt Hon Sir George Young Bt (Conservative MP and chief whip), the discussion followed perfectly from the last.

Session 11: Media Oversight of Parliament

Hosted by Nick Robinson (BBC), Andrew Sparrow (Guardian Unlimited) and John Whittingdale (Labour MP), the relationship of the media and its role to hold government to account was fulsomely discussed.

Session 12: Debate on Internet Governance

With direction given by Kate Emms, Clerk of PMBs and Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo (Labour MP), a debate on the following motion was held amongst the delegates: 'The current multi-stakeholder model of internet governance is the best way to promote freedom of expression, Economic growth and development'. Delegates had an amusing time exchanging in parliamentary-debate style.

Session 13: Women in Parliament

Hosted by Brooks Newmark (Conservative MP), Donna Cox (MP Trinidad and Tobago), Baroness Jenkin of Kerrington (Conservative) and Shabana Mahmood (Labour MP), the discussion brought forward the great strides being made in improving women`s place in our democracies. Our colleagues of the developing world had particularly interesting developments to share, such as guaranteed representation in the Upper Houses and party lists that require women being guaranteed representation.

Session 14: Parliamentary Questions and motions

Hosted by Sharon Hodgson (Labour MP), Tracey Jessup (Deputy Principal Clerk HoC) and Hon Fazle Rabbi (Deputy Speaker, Bangladesh), this session focused on the many ways the various parliaments facilitate MPs ability to bring question and motions to the House. Much could be gained if the Canadian parliament adopted some of the current methods employed in the UK parliament.

Session 15: Holding the Prime Minister to Account – Prime Minister`s Questions

Hosted by Liam Laurence Smyth Clerk of the Journals, House of Commons, Delegates were given the opportunity to watch videos of the UK Parliament`s Prime Minister`s Question Time, and discuss the quality of the questions and answers. Unlike the Canadian experience, the Speaker has greater rein to choose the questioners, making for a very dynamic and informative question and answer period.

Session 16: Bicameralism

Hosted by Prof. Lord Norton of Louth (Conservative), Sen. Godliver Omondi (Parliament of Kenya), and Rt Hon Lord Richard QC (Labour), this session explored the advantages and disadvantages of bicameral legislatures. While most Commonwealth legislatures featuring bicameralism have unelected upper houses, some jurisdictions have experimented with elected upper houses, and others have hybrid upper houses that include reserved seats for various cultural and minority communities.

Session 17: The Working Parliament

Delegates were invited to observe House of Commons debates from the vista of the visitor galleries.

Session 18: Standards and Privileges and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)

Hosted by Heather Wheeler (Conservative MP), Rt Hon Sir Kevin Barron (Labour MP), Kathryn Hudson (Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards) and Eve Samson (Clerk, Standards and Privileges), the role of the ethics commissioners was discussed, as well as codes of conduct.

Session 19: The Future of Parliament: Reconnecting Parliament and the People

Hosted by Lloyd Owen (Head of Campaign Management HoC), Andrew Percy (Conservative MP) and Lord Puttnam CBE (Labour), the session focused on voter participation in elections, and the various attempts to reinvigorate the electorate.

Session 20: The Committee System

Hosted by Rt Hon John Spellar (Labour MP), the role of committees to scrutinize legislation was discussed.

Session 21: Parliament and Civil Society

Hosted by Stephen Doughty, (Labour Coop MP), Danny Burns (Participation and Social Change IDS), Oliver Henman (Partnerships and International Team NCVO), and Eilidh Whiteford (SNP MP), the session explored the relationship between parliamentarians and civil society organisations and NGOs. Discussion centered on improving the partnerships.

Session 22: Electoral Systems

Hosted by Sir Robert Smith (Liberal Democrat), Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour), Tim Macindoe (MP New Zealand) and Alan Renwick (University of Reading), discussions focused on making parliament relevant to civil society, such as by introducing proportional representation. Reserved seats for cultural and minority communities was also discussed.

Closing Plenary

Hosts and Delegates expressed great satisfaction for the opportunity to exchange on so many relevant matters. Special mention was made to thank our host, Andrew Tuggey DL, Chief Executive and Secretary of the CPA UK.

Session 23: Constituency Visits

Parliamentarians were assigned to various London ridings. Local MPs graciously offered of their time to discuss the realities of constituency work in the UK context.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Preston, MP

Chair

Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-UK Inter-Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	63 rd Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure
DESTINATION	London, United Kingdom
DATES	June 16-20, 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Philip Toone, M.P.
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$1,844.55
ACCOMMODATION	Included in registration fees
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$892.87
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$2,849.76
TOTAL	\$5,587.18