



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding
its Visit to Washington, D.C.**

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

Washington, D.C., USA

January 13 - 15, 2014

Report

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visited Washington, D.C., from January 13 – 15, 2014. Mr. Joe Preston, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch led the delegation and was accompanied by the Honourable David Smith, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch. The delegation was assisted by Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the CPA.

The objectives of the visit to Washington D.C. are related to the Caribbean Initiative, a project launched by the CPA Federal Branch and endorsed by all provinces and territories across Canada. The essence of the project is that legislatures of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 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 would be to increase cooperation between parliaments, including the sharing of ideas and best practices. The visit to Washington was deemed important in order to raise the profile of the initiative with organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the UNDP, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank as well as the State Department. Canada has strong trading and investment relations with the Caribbean region, and Canada represents the Commonwealth Caribbean countries in its constituencies at the IMF and the World Bank.

Meeting with Thomas Hockin, Executive Director (Canada, Ireland and the Caribbean), and Senior Advisor, Antoine Brunelle-Côté, International Monetary Fund:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 188 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world. It oversees the international monetary system and monitors the financial and economic policies of its members. It keeps track of economic developments on a national, regional, and global basis, consulting regularly with member countries and providing them with macroeconomic and financial policy advice.

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Mr. Hockin, Executive Director (Canada, Ireland and the Caribbean), expressed interest in the proposed Caribbean Initiative program, most specifically that the program could serve to train parliamentary officials of Caribbean Commonwealth countries in the art of legislative drafting. He indicated that many legislative delays in these countries are associated with inadequate legislative drafting skills. Mr. Preston indicated that under the auspices of the Caribbean Twinning Initiative, a training session, bringing together drafters from Caribbean Commonwealth countries, the provinces, the federal parliament as well as academics at the University of Ottawa could be organized to teach the skills needed to enhance their respective legislative drafting skills, thereby looking to accelerate the timing of passage for pieces of legislation that are important to the country's financial stability.

Meeting with Will Davis, Director, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Congressman David Price:

In existence since 1966, the UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, the UNDP offers global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with Will Davis, the Director of the UNDP representation Office in Washington. Mr. Davis also expressed interest in the Caribbean Initiative citing its usefulness in providing post-election seminars as well as on-going training for parliamentarians. He expressed

interest in possibly having a representative of the UNDP attend any of these seminars. He cited the work of the UNDP in the areas of sustainable development, energy and the environment, governance, and crisis prevention and recovery and suggested that the CPA might consider partnering with the UNDP on any of these initiatives in context with the Caribbean project.

Also of interest during the meeting was the invitation extended for the delegation to meet with Congressman David Price, a democrat from North Carolina who has been instrumental in establishing the House Democratic Partnership Program. The delegation made arrangements to meet with Congressman Price, and learned that the program is the indirect successor to the Frost-Solomon Task Force, which provided assistance to the legislatures of 10 new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe from 1990-1996. Inspired by their participation in the Frost-Solomon Task Force's activities, Representatives David Dreier and David Price collaborated to revive and expand its mission. On March 14, 2005, the House of Representatives voted to establish the House Democracy Assistance Commission with a mandate to work with emerging democracies throughout the world. The Commission works with partner legislatures in 16 countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, and Timor-Leste. The delegation was interested to hear of the Commission's work that mirrored the work the Caribbean Initiative seeks to accomplish, particularly in the areas of governance, legislative drafting and the bolstering of library capabilities and accessibility by providing training and technical support for enhanced information technology systems.

Meeting with Sue Saarnio, Director of Canadian Affairs, and Juan Alsace, Director of Caribbean Affairs, U.S. State Department:

Senior representatives from the State Department in the Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs expressed interest in the aims and objectives of the project, as it looks to increase cooperation between Parliaments as part of a broader initiative to strengthen democracy and improve governance practices. It has mirrored much of the work undertaken in the Western Hemisphere Bureau and they undertook to bring attention to the project with their respective interlocutors.

Meeting with James Haley, Executive Director for Canada, Inter-American Development Bank:

Established in 1959, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is the leading source of development financing for Latin America and the Caribbean, with a strong commitment to achieve measurable results, increased integrity, transparency and accountability. James Haley was supportive of the program as explained by the delegation members, most particularly as he suggested that a stronger governance structure would lead to enhanced economic development within the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. He thought Canada to be an ideal partner in governance strengthening in the Caribbean. Potential projects discussed included legislative drafting, training, transforming libraries, and post-election seminars. The possibility of funding for such a program was raised and it was suggested that the Inter-American Development Bank could partner with CIDA to provide financial support to make such projects a reality.

Meeting with Ambassador Alfonso Quinonez, Secretary for External Relations, Organization of American States:

The Organization of American States (OAS) was established in order to achieve among its member states—as stipulated in Article 1 of the Charter—"an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence."

Today, the OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere. In addition, it has granted permanent observer status to 69 states, as well as to the European Union (EU).

The Organization's four main pillars—democracy, human rights, security and integral development, support each other and are intertwined through political dialogue, inclusiveness, cooperation, and legal and follow-up instruments that provide the OAS with the tools to maximize its work in the Hemisphere.

The OAS representatives present were interested to hear of the twinning initiative and thought it to be worthwhile, especially as it was noted that while parliaments in larger Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad and the Bahamas meet on a weekly basis, others may meet very infrequently. As such, a twinning program focusing on capacity building would lead to a better governance structure and provide much needed training, especially with the smaller legislatures. Mr. Preston noted that the upcoming CPA seminar offered annually to all Commonwealth legislatures, would focus on a strong Caribbean component in order to bring to light across the Commonwealth the importance that the Canadian CPA is placing on the twinning initiative.

Meeting with Alister Smith, Executive Director, Office of the Executive Director for Canada, Ireland and the Caribbean, The World Bank:

The World Bank is a United Nations international financial institution that provides loans to developing countries for capital programmes. The World Bank is a component of the World Bank Group, and a member of the United Nations Development Group. It serves as a source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world.

Mr. Smith stated that the financial situation in the Caribbean region has deteriorated since 2009, and this has affected the growth of their economies and job availability. As an example, he stated that poverty has increased by 7% since that time in Jamaica. However, while the Caribbean as a region struggles with a high rate of indebtedness, its private sector still allows for great opportunities for economic growth, particularly in the areas of agri-business and tourism.

He was supportive of the Caribbean Twinning Initiative, since, as earlier expressed by Mr. Haley of the Inter-American Development Bank, such a programme designed to strengthen governance structures within these countries, would lead to a greater opportunity for economic growth. In particular, he expressed interest in the possibility of offering an open-budgeting program, to provide the ability of parliaments of the Caribbean to exercise a greater measure of parliamentary budgetary oversight from an

individual, institutional and network perspective, such as strengthening the network of Public Accounts Committees throughout the Caribbean. Mr. Preston stated that the organization GOPAC (Global Organizations of Parliamentarians against Corruption) has already undertaken work to this effect in the Caribbean region, and suggested that the CPA could partner to enhance its work. The World Bank suggested that it has been effective in offering network-based learning programs, centred for the most part on financial issues.

The delegation would like to thank Mr. Denis Stevens, Deputy Head of Mission, Canadian Embassy in Washington, Mr. Allan Culham, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Organization of American States and the staff in Washington, particularly Dan Abele and Jennifer Loten, for their assistance provided to the delegation prior to and during its time in Washington.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Joe Preston, M.P., Chair
Canadian Branch
of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Visit to Washington, D.C.
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C.
DATES	January 13 – 15, 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable David Smith, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Joe Preston, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Elizabeth Kingston
TRANSPORTATION	\$2,530.43
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,535.44
HOSPITALITY	\$1,021.33
PER DIEMS	\$577.05
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$369.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$6,033.25