

Canada – United Kingdom
Inter-Parliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada – Royaume-Uni

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Bilateral Visit to Wales**

Canada–United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association

**Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom
March 13 – 18, 2011**

Report

A delegation of the Canada-UK Inter-Parliamentary Association visited Wales from March 13-18, 2011.

The delegation was led by the Hon. Jim Abbott, PC, MP and included the following members of the delegation:

Hon. Jim Munson, Senator

Hon. Richard Neufeld, Senator

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, PC, MP

The delegation was assisted by Stephanie Bond, Executive Secretary of the Canada-United Kingdom Association.

The objectives of the visit were as such:

- discuss the current political dynamic in the United Kingdom and Canada
- compare and contrast parliamentary systems
- explore the functioning of minority parliaments
- discuss the relationship between the federal and provincial governments within Canada and the powers of the Welsh Assembly and Westminster
- discuss the role of party politics and the approval of the budget
- discuss devolution of powers and any future devolution in terms of education, languages and taxation
- discuss improvements to parliamentary infrastructure
- exchange on methods of enhancing citizen participation and e-democracy
- explore the issues of effective scrutiny of government to ensure sustainable and transparent democracy

Briefing meeting with Dan Clayton-Jones, Canadian Honorary Consul to Wales

The program commenced with a thorough briefing from Dan Clayton-Jones, Canadian Honorary Consul to Wales. Mr. Clayton-Jones provided an overview of the history of Wales. He described the importance of Welsh coal as the natural resource that fuelled the Industrial Revolution. The Honorary Consul highlighted the past role of the capital city, Cardiff as a major shipping port.

The devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly was discussed at length. Contrasts were made between Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The results of the recent referendum on March 3, 2011 which allocated further powers for making laws in Wales to the National Assembly was of great interest to the delegation. Following the yes vote, the National Assembly is now able to pass laws on all subjects in twenty devolved areas without first needing the agreement of the UK Parliament. The Honorary Consul provided an overview of the current composition of the Assembly and the nature of the coalition government that is in place. The current composition consists of 48% women

which is likely to decrease in the upcoming elections on May 5, 2011. It was noted that Wales does not have taxation powers and instead receives a block grant from London.

Meeting with the Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler AM

The Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler AM welcomed the delegation to the Senedd. The Deputy Presiding Officer explained the environmental and design features of the building and highlighted the use of British Columbia cedar as a key element of the main hall design. The design elements of the Senedd represent openness and transparency which are core values of the Assembly. The Deputy Presiding Officer provided an overview of the parliamentary system in Wales and the benefits and challenges of proportional representation. Senator Munson explained his role as Senate Whip and the appointment process in the Senate. The delegation presented the system for establishing electoral boundaries and the electoral system in Canada. Representation of women in the Assembly and the list system were discussed.

Formal presentation on the National Assembly and Devolution in Wales

Dianne Bevan, Chief Operating Officer and Keith Bush, Director of Legal Services conducted a presentation on the National Assembly and devolution in Wales.

The presenters explained that Wales was formally brought into the Union with England by two acts passed in 1536 and 1542. Henry VIII essentially made himself King of Wales. These acts refused the use of the Welsh language in the administration of the country. In 1746, a law was passed by the UK Parliament which stated that any law passed by Parliament in Westminster that referred to England automatically included Wales. This law lasted until 1967. Wales gained its own Minister of State who was given a cabinet position in 1964 creating the Secretary of State for Wales.

The first proposals for devolution were brought forward by the 1974-1979 Labour Government who initiated the Wales Act of 1978. The referendum in 1979 rejected devolution (4 out of 5 against with 60% voter turnout). Following the return of a Labour Government in 1997, Her Majesty's Government published the white paper '*A Voice for Wales*', which outlined proposals for devolution in Wales. These proposals included establishing a National Assembly for Wales.

On September 18, 1997 people living in Wales voted in a referendum on the proposed Assembly. The proposal was endorsed; however, the outcome was narrow with 50.3% voting for and 49.7% against. In 1998, Parliament passed the Government of Wales Act, a piece of legislation establishing the National Assembly for Wales and setting out its constitution. This was followed by the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999, which enabled the transfer of the devolved powers and responsibilities from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Assembly to take place on July 1st 1999.

The first election was held on 6 May 1999, with the first sitting taking place on July 1, 1999. Elections are held every four years. Elections for the Fourth Assembly will take place on May 5, 2011. What the creation of the Assembly has meant is that policy and spending decisions affecting Wales in a range of areas (previously taken by a central government in Westminster) are now shaped and implemented in Wales by an elected body of politicians accountable through the ballot box to the people of Wales.

On March 3, 2011, the people of Wales voted in favour of granting the National Assembly for Wales further powers for making laws in Wales. Prior to the referendum, the National Assembly had powers to make laws for Wales on some subjects within the 20 areas that it has devolved powers. Following the yes vote, the National Assembly is now able to pass laws on all subjects in the 20 devolved areas without first needing the agreement of the UK Parliament. The National Assembly for Wales can make laws in the following 20 devolved areas: agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development; ancient monuments and historic buildings; culture; economic development; education and training; environment; fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety; food; health and health services; highways and transport; housing; local government; National Assembly for Wales; public administration; social welfare; sport and recreation; tourism; town and country planning; water and flood defence and the Welsh language.

Presentation on Wales

Geraint Thomas, Brand and Planning Manager of “*Visit Wales*” provided an overview of the tourist industry in Wales. Wales is over 20,000 square km and is home to 2,903,085 people. The capital city is Cardiff with a population of 305,345 is home to the Welsh National Opera, the National Museum Wales, the Millennium Centre and the Millennium Stadium. Mr. Thomas explained the reasons why visitors choose Wales which include the natural environment and the culture and heritage. Wales is branded as a “*human place*.” The delegation discussed environmental protection and National Parks in Wales and Canada. Mr. Thomas explained that the Welsh language was on a decline in the 1960s however since that time, parents have increasingly sent their children to Welsh language schools which has resulted in a resurgence of the Welsh language and culture.

Working Bilingually - Welsh/Canadian Perspectives

Welsh Assembly Staff, Siân Richards, Text; Siôn Edwards, Simultaneous Translation; and Dr. Non Gwilym, Head of Communications provided an overview of working bilingually in Wales. While English is spoken by everyone in Wales, Welsh language is spoken today by just over 20% of the population, and is even more commonly spoken by younger people. It is one of Europe’s oldest living languages and its origins can be traced back nearly 2,500 years to the Celtic languages spoken widely in Europe during the Iron Age.

The Welsh Language Scheme states that the Assembly as Wales’s principal democratic institution has a duty to enable all citizens and Assembly Members to be informed about, and contribute fully to, the democratic process in their chosen language – through Welsh or through English. The Assembly considers that operating as a truly bilingual institution involves enabling the Assembly to conduct every aspect of its business through the medium of Welsh and English on an equal basis; guaranteeing that any consultation process between the Assembly and the people of Wales will be bilingual; and providing a fully bilingual public information, education and visitors’ service. Assembly Members speak both Welsh and English in the Chamber and Welsh-English interpretation is provided. The increased demand for Welsh language education was highlighted. The Canadian delegation explained the incentives for

bilingual public servants. Hon. Jim Abbott, PC, MP raised the issue of the cost associated with providing government services in both official languages.

Commonwealth Day Reception

The delegation attended a Commonwealth Day reception hosted by the Presiding Officer, Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM. Ms. Janet Ryder AM spoke on behalf of the Welsh branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association during the event and welcomed the delegation.

Holding the Welsh Government, Parliamentarians & the Assembly to Account

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly; Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business; and Aled Eirug, Constitutional Advisor to the Presiding Officer gave a presentation on the topic of *Holding the Welsh Government, Parliamentarians & the Assembly to Account*. The Clerk of the Assembly spoke to the upcoming elections and indicated that 16 of the 60 Assembly Members will not be seeking re-election. The election will take place against the backdrop of new standing orders following the yes vote in the recent referendum. The Clerk provided an overview of the five themes of the Assembly which include communications, E-democracy, professional experience, governance and openness and transparency. The Assembly has focused much attention on communications including social media, public outreach and branding. Wales is seen as a leader in E-democracy, e-voting and electronic consultation. The Assembly will rely on its professional experience to allow for a seamless transition to the new legislative process following the yes vote in the referendum. The Assembly strives to be exemplars in governance and has in place a rigorous financial management and record-keeping system. Openness and transparency are themes throughout the architecture and the functioning of Assembly business. For example, Members' pay and allowances are published on the website.

On the topic of holding government to account, a discussion ensued on the difference between government and Parliament and the importance of communicating the differences to the public. The Clerk explained the experience of a coalition government in Wales. The Canadian delegation described the minority situation in Canada and the possibility of an impending election.

Aled Eirug, Constitutional Advisor to the Presiding Officer and former Head of BBC Wales commented on media consumption patterns in Wales. Most notably, Wales does not have a daily newspaper. The question of how best to reach the people is an important consideration.

Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business provided an overview on the Assembly Research Services and the support the office provides Assembly Members. The Research Services provides an orientation program to new Members. The Clerk provided a brief overview of the committee system. There are 19 committees and 45 of the 60 Assembly members sit on committees.

Making Laws for the People of Wales

Bethan Davies, Committee Clerk and Gwyn Griffiths of the Legal Division, National Assembly for Wales explained the process of making laws for the people of Wales. The Canadian delegation provided an overview of the responsibilities of the federal and

provincial governments. Wales's lack of tax-levying powers and the role of the Auditor General were discussed. It was noted that the court system is not devolved. The Committee Clerk explained the upcoming changes to the standing orders following the referendum. Scrutiny of bills and the stages of the legislative processes were discussed.

Lunch hosted by the CPA Wales Branch

Janet Ryder AM, Chair of the CPA Wales Branch provided an overview of the current issues at the international level of the CPA. Eleanor Burnham AM ; Mohammad Asghar AM; Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk to the National Assembly; Natalie Drury-Styles, Acting Branch Secretary; and Al Davies, Branch Secretariat attended the luncheon meeting. Following the luncheon, the delegation observed the plenary debate and First Minister's Questions.

Representing the Interests of Wales & its People (Citizen Participation)

Natalie Drury-Styles, Facilitator, Outreach & International Relations Manager; Peter Black AM, **Commissioner for the Assembly and the Citizen**; Iwan Williams, Media, Publications & Website Content Manager; and Becca Spiller, South Wales Outreach & Liaison Manager. Peter Black AM, **Commissioner for the Assembly** provided an overview of the e-democracy initiatives. The importance of engaging citizens in a conversation came through in the discussions. Web streaming of the Chamber and Senedd television allow for viewers to access the proceedings. The E-democracy projects are focused on applying new technology to engage citizens. The Chamber is televised and wired to allow for paperless proceedings and e-voting. The petition process is also accessible online and e-petitions are admissible. Iwan Williams, Media, Publications & Website Content Manager outlined the Assembly's engagement strategy and the Vote 2011 initiative. The Assembly conducted a committee study on Safe Place to Play and engaged children through outreach activities. The Assembly has a bus which it uses to travel outside of the capital to the communities as part of its outreach activities. The Canadian delegation praised the Assembly for its commitment to citizen engagement.

Reception hosted by the Welsh Regiment

The delegation received a briefing on the role of the Welsh Regiment in the Battle of 1812. The delegation noted that many commemorative activities will take place in Canada to mark the occasion.

Presentation of Siambr Hywel and the Assembly's Education Service

Enfys Evans, Teacher provided presented the Siambr Hywel and the Assembly's Education Service. The Assembly Education Service provides a programme of structured visits based on the Primary and Secondary schools curricula in Wales. Visits include an active debate in Siambr Hywel (a dedicated youth facility which was the former Assembly Chamber), a visit to the Senedd and workshop activity designed to reinforce and build upon the educational content of the visit. The Assembly's Education Service welcomes over 400 students per week and has an interactive website for students and teachers. All services are provided in both English and Welsh. A component of the students' visit to the Senedd includes a mock parliament. Students who wish to participate are eligible for travel subsidies. The Assembly's Education

Service also conducts outreach programs in the community. Senator Richard Neufeld described the many youth programs in Canada including the Teacher's institute and the Forum for young Canadians.

Minority & Coalition Governments

Representing all parties in Wales, Baroness Randerson AM, Alun Davies AM, David Melding AM and Janet Ryder AM spoke candidly about the process of creating a coalition government. It was agreed that the coalition government has worked remarkably well during the past session. Negotiations that took place to form coalition governments were discussed at length. The Canadian delegation discussed the current minority situation and the public perception on coalitions. The fixed term of the Assembly is a major difference from the Canadian system where an election can be called at anytime. The differences between first past the post and proportional representations were explored. Following the meeting, the delegation attended a luncheon meeting where discussions on coalitions continued with the Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler AM; William Graham AM and Lorraine Barrett AM.

Welsh Government session

Charles Coombs, Constitutional Affairs and Policy Support, Department of the First Minister and the Cabinet provided an overview of the work of the Welsh Assembly Government since 1999. Mr. Coombs outlined devolution from the point of the view of the government rather than the Assembly. He explained that devolution was a process not an event and outlined the twenty devolved sectors. The creation of a Commissioner for Children was of great interest to the delegation. The role of the Commissioner is to speak for young people in Wales. Through the process of the devolution the Welsh government was focused on the theme of *delivery*.

Pierhead Event: Guest Speakers Hon. Jim Abbott, PC, MP and Hon. Carolyn Bennett PC, MP

A public event including presentations and Q & A sessions was organized by the National Assembly for Wales. On behalf of the delegation, Hon. Jim Abbott PC, MP was invited to speak on Economic Avenues with Canada and Canada's Role in Sport and Hon. Carolyn Bennett PC, MP was invited to speak on Citizen Engagement.

Presiding Officer Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM welcomed citizens and special guests to the event. He spoke to the close ties between Canada and Wales and the bilingual nature of our two countries. The Former First Minister of Wales, Rhodri Morgan AM facilitated the session and reiterated the strong relations between Canada and Wales and that both countries share a border with large neighbours.

Economic Avenues with Canada

The first guest speaker, Hon. Jim Abbott PC MP spoke on the topic of Economic Avenues. Hon. Jim Abbott provided a brief overview of the economic situation in Canada and the limitless possibilities for collaboration between Canada and the United Kingdom. He explained that commercial and economic relations between Canada and the United Kingdom reached an all-time high over the past couple of years. The UK is by far Canada's most important commercial partner in Europe and from a global perspective ranks second only to the United States.

Hon. Jim Abbott explained that the factors that accounted for Canada's ability to weather the global recession better than most other industrialized countries. He reinforced Canada's science and technology partnership with the UK and stated that the relationship continues to flourish, underpinning dual goals of strong yet sustainable economic growth. Indeed, the UK is Canada's second largest partner worldwide in the science and technology sector, with a particularly close relationship in the field of clinical research, accounting for more than a quarter of all scientific collaborations.

Two-way merchandise trade between Canada Wales totaled £444.4 million in 2009 (C\$696 million), with Canadian exports at £267.8 million (C\$433.5 million) and imports at £176.6 million (C\$276.6 million). The main Canadian exports to Wales consisted of crude materials, minerals, fuels and lubricants as well as machinery and transport equipment. Canada's main imports from Wales were minerals, fuels and lubricants, chemicals products as well as machinery and transport equipment. Canadian companies active in Wales include Standard Life Financial, Finning International, Mitel Networks, Western Coal Corporation, Magellan Aerospace, Aastra Technologies and Magna International.

Citizen Engagement

Hon. Carolyn Bennett MP, PC spoke on the topic of citizen engagement. Dr. Bennett stated that the centre of our democracy is the citizen. One of the cornerstones of democracy has been to provide public spaces in which citizens can discuss ideas and the web provides a new and important space which can change the notion of representative democracy. During the presentation, Dr. Bennett reiterated a quote by Stephen Coleman: "*People don't want to govern, they want to be heard.*" In order to engage citizens, Dr. Bennett explained that she conducts town halls, roundtables, school visits and uses the internet, newsletters, social media, telephone townhalls (teleforums), msn chat to communicate and interact with citizens.

Dr. Bennett commended the National Assembly for Wales for its commitment to transparency and citizen engagement. Welsh citizens are encouraged and enabled to see their Assembly Members at work. The Assembly's goal is to widen engagement in devolution and in all their work to demonstrate respect, probity and good governance. Dr. Bennett stated that the Welsh offices of outreach and education are exemplary. She highlighted the value of e-consultation and stated that the Welsh Petitions Committee is proud of their e-petitions on their website. Dr. Bennett stated that citizen engagement is clearly a priority and is built into the DNA of the organization.

Canada's Role in Sport

Hon. Jim Abbott PC, MP also spoke on the topic of Canada's Role in Sport and explained that the mission of Sport Canada is to enhance opportunities for all Canadians to participate and excel in sport. This is achieved by enhancing the capacity and coordination of the Canadian sport system, encouraging participation in sport and enabling Canadians with talent and dedication to achieve excellence in international sport.

Hon. Abbott provided an overview of the *Own the Podium 2010* initiative which was launched in preparation for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in British Columbia. The

Own the Podium 2010 initiative is a \$110M national sport technical initiative that was designed to help Canada become the leading nation at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in terms of total medals won, and place in the top-3 nations at the Paralympic Winter Games in terms of gold medals won. The Own the Podium initiative helped Canadian athletes win 26 Olympic medals during the Vancouver Winter Games including 14 gold, and by so doing establishing a record of most gold medals won by a single nation during a winter edition of the Olympic Games.

Hon. Abbott ended the presentation by stating that Canada is proud to support its high performance athletes and the Canadian sport system and the government's support provides our athletes with the opportunity to inspire and encourage Canadians' participation in sport from playground to podium.

Former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan referred to the health issues of child obesity and the importance of promoting physical activity. Dr. Bennett stated that programs to increase physical activity must also take into account the financial limitations of lower income families.

The program concluded with an Official Dinner hosted by Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM, Presiding Officer; Claude Boucher, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of Canada to the United Kingdom; Gillian Licari, Political Officer, High Commission of Canada to the United Kingdom; Aled Eirug, Constitutional Advisor to the Presiding Officer; and Natalie Drury-Styles, Director, International Relations were in attendance.

In conclusion, the delegates would like to express their appreciation to the Parliamentary Research Branch of the Library of Parliament for the excellent background information provided in preparation for the bilateral visit. Special thanks are also offered to the staff of the National Assembly for Wales and Mr. Dan Clayton-Jones, Canadian Honorary Consul to Wales for their extremely professional assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Dick Harris, MP, Chair for
The Hon. Jim Abbott, PC, MP,
Leader of the delegation

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Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada–United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Wales
DESTINATION	Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom
DATES	March 13 – 18, 2011
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Jim Munson, Senator Hon. Richard Neufeld, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Carolyn Bennett, PC, MP
STAFF	Ms. Stephanie Bond Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 35,436.38
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,609.96
HOSPITALITY	\$ 335.93
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,100.94
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 344.73
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0
TOTAL	\$ 39,827.94