



**REPORT OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION OF THE CANADIAN
BRANCH
OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
TO THE
STUDY GROUP ON BENCHMARKS FOR DEMOCRATIC
LEGISLATURES
Bermuda
October 30 to November 3, 2006**

The Parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association that participated in the Study Group on Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures was held in Bermuda from October 30 – November 3, 2006 and, pursuant to Standing Order 34 (1), has the honour to present the following report.

Report

The Canadian Branch was represented by the Honourable Jane Cordy, Senator.

The Study Group on Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures was held at Bermuda College from October 30, 2006 to November 3, 2006. The meetings were chaired by Dennis Marshall, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Secretary General expressed the view that this study was one of the most important tasks undertaken by the CPA. The members of the study group were Parliamentarians from Canada, Ghana, Scotland, Pakistan and Bermuda and a very strong resource group from the World Bank Institute, the UNDP and the National Democratic Institute. A list of members of the study group and their affiliation is included as an appendix.

There is a need for democratic legislatures and a need for a set of principles which should be followed. The purpose of the study group was to develop international minimum standards for democratic legislatures.

There is often an emphasis on free and fair elections but often little follow up after the election is over. In post conflict, the legislature is often forgotten and there is an absence of international standards of what constitute good democracy. It was felt that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association could help to articulate some basic benchmarks. If we are to be accountable as parliamentarians and if we are to know whether or not what is being done is successful, it is important to have indicators which can be measured. The establishment of benchmarks and minimum standards for democracy were the focus of the study group.

On working toward the establishment of the benchmarks the study group focused on a number of areas:

The Representative Aspects of Parliament

- Election of legislators
- Candidate eligibility
- Representatives of committees
- Parties and Party Groups
- Constituent relations

Ensuring the Independence, Effectiveness and Accountability

- Legislator immunity
- Sessions
- Committee organizations and powers
- Legislative function

- Oversight function

Parliamentary Procedures and the Legislative Process

- Plenary debate
- Presiding officers

The Parliamentary Service

- Parliamentary staff
- Hiring procedures
- Recording and publishing of proceedings

Public Accountability

- Transparent voting
- Citizen participation and input
- Audits of the executive branch

Parliament and the Media

- Media access
- Public access

A full discussion as to what should and should not be included was held at every session. The document was reviewed to ensure that the intent of the participants would be understood by those reading it. It was stated that benchmarks are what we aspire to. The completed document was adopted and it will be published at a later date in a book form.

We were most fortunate that the last day of our visit coincided with the opening of Parliament in Bermuda. We were invited to the Speech from the Throne and later to the Parliament where we were introduced. Interestingly enough, issues mentioned in the Throne Speech such as health care, health promotion, housing, seniors are often the priorities of many countries.

It was a privilege to represent the Parliament of Canada at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group.

Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Russ Hiebert, M.P.
Chair,
for,
Hon. Jane Cordy, Senator

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

Appendix: List of Participants



**Study Group on
Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures
Bermuda, 30 October – 3 November 2006
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

BERMUDA

Senator Alfred Oughton MBE
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Hon Dame Jennifer Smith DBE, JP, DHumL, MP
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Mr. John Barritt JP, MP
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WORLD BANK INSTITUTE

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CPA SECRETARIAT

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OBSERVERS

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Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian (Federal) Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Study Group on Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures
DESTINATION	Hamilton, Bermuda
DATES	October 30 – November 3, 2006
SENATORS	Hon. Jane Cordy, Senator
MEMBERS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 1,244.97
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 131.74
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 100.46
TOTAL	\$ 1,477.17