



Canada – United Kingdom
Inter-Parliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada – Royaume-Uni

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding its Election Observation Mission to the United Kingdom

**Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and
Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association**

**Exeter, Glasgow East, Watford and Wirral West
United Kingdom**

May 2 – 10, 2015

Report

Overview:

Between May 2nd and May 10th 2015, 22 Parliamentarians from Canada, Cook Islands, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malta, Namibia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, and Uzbekistan travelled to the United Kingdom to observe the May 7th general election. The Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was represented by Senator Nancy Ruth (Conservative), Senator David Smith (Liberal), Member of Parliament Tyrone Benskin (NDP), and myself.

The members of the observation mission were assigned to small teams of 2-4 to observe six different electoral districts. Canadian Parliamentarians attended the following districts: Exeter (Ms. Ruth), Glasgow East (Mr. Benskin), Watford (Mr. Shory), and Wirral West (Mr. Smith).

Timeline:

After a day and a half of training on May 3rd and 4th, the teams dispersed to their assigned districts to meet with electoral stakeholders for May 5th and 6th. Members met with parliamentary candidates, election officials, local officials, civil society organizations, union representatives, student groups, etc. During this time, members also attended sessions of mail in ballot opening and counting.

On Election Day on May 7th, the teams attended numerous polling stations to observe electoral procedure and note strengths and weaknesses to discuss later. Returning to London on May 8th, the teams attended the House of Parliament for a press conference regarding their mission. I also enjoyed the opportunity to visit the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association headquarters to meet with our counterparts from the United Kingdom.

Electoral Results:

The results of the 2015 election in the United Kingdom produced a measure of surprise since pre-election opinion polls generally predicted a stronger showing among the left of centre parties. However, the Conservatives led by David Cameron won a slim majority of seats at 330 out of 650, while Labour led by Ed Miliband won 232 seats to form the Opposition. The secessionist Scottish National Party led by Nicola Sturgeon won 56 out of 59 seats in Scotland, thus earning third party status. The Liberal Democrats led by Nick Clegg, who had formed the junior partner in a governing coalition with the Conservatives, were reduced from 56 seats to 8. The United Kingdom Independence Party led by Nigel Farage was reduced to a single seat.

In particular, the electoral districts which Canadian Parliamentarians observed produced the following results:

- Exeter: Ben Bradshaw (Labour); 46.4 % of the vote
- Glasgow East: Natalie McGarry (Scottish National Party), 56.9% of the vote
- Watford: Richard Harrington (Conservative), 43.5% of the vote
- Wirral West: Margaret Greenwood (Labour) 41.5% of the vote

Recommendations:

The Parliamentarians on the Election Observation Mission generally concluded that the election was conducted with efficiency, transparency, and integrity. However, they suggested that Elections officials in the United Kingdom consider the following recommendations:

- Voter Identification: some form of government issued photograph identification should be shown before a voter receives their ballot;
- Partisans at Polling Stations: active campaigning in and around polling stations should be prevented;
- Greater attention to and enforcement of proper polling procedure and best practices: isolated incidents of multiple voters entering a polling booth at the same time, inadequately laid out polling stations which did not secure the privacy of the polling booths, and a lack of provision of means for blind voters and voters with other disabilities to complete and cast their ballots without previously arranged assistance should be corrected;
- Standardizing Signage: uniform signage indicating the location of polling stations and instructing voters on how to complete and cast their ballots should be implemented;

Commendations:

The staff of the United Kingdom Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association were consistently helpful and professional in their interactions with the Parliamentarians throughout the Election Observation Mission. Additionally, the elections officials who facilitated observation at the polling stations on Election Day provided courteous advice and accommodation to members of the Election Observation Mission.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Mr. James Rajotte, M.P.
Chair, Canada-United Kingdom
Inter-Parliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Election Observation Mission to the United Kingdom
DESTINATION	Exeter, Glasgow East, Watford and Wirral West
DATES	May 2-10, 2015
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Nancy Ruth, Senator Hon. David Smith, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Devinder Shory, MP Mr. Tyrone Benskin, MP
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$6,981.45
ACCOMMODATION	\$0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$2,016.09
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$8,997.54