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**Report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth  
Parliamentary Association**

**64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference**

**Kampala, Uganda**

**September 22 to 29, 2019**

# Report

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which attended the 64<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Kampala, Uganda from September 22 to 29, 2019 has the honour to present its report.

The Canadian Branch was represented by the following delegates:

The Hon. Terry Mercer, Senator, *Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch and Head of Delegation*

The Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator

The Hon. Marc Gold, Senator

The Hon. Diane F. Griffin, Senator

The Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator

The Hon. Victor Oh, Senator

The Hon. Donald Plett, Senator

The Hon. Yuen Pau Woo, Senator (*alternate Canadian Branch Representative on EXCO*), and

Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary

The Canadian Branch delegation was part of the 26 member Canadian Region delegation to the Conference which also included representatives of several provincial legislatures of the Canadian Region.

As the alternate Canadian Branch Regional Representative on the Executive Committee (EXCO), Senator Yuen Pau Woo attended the EXCO meetings held on September 23 to 25, 2019.

During the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC, there were a number of additional conferences and meetings including: 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference; 6<sup>th</sup> Triennial Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference; 64<sup>th</sup> CPA General Assembly; meetings of the CPA Executive Committee; and the Society of Clerks at the Table (SOCATT) meetings. This year, the Conference held elections for the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the CPA Treasurer and the CPA Small Branches Chairperson for new three-year terms.

Commonwealth parliamentarians attending the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC and associated meetings recognized the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and met under the Conference theme of "*Adaption, engagement, and evolution of Parliaments in a rapidly changing Commonwealth.*"

The Conference, hosted by the CPA Uganda Branch and the Parliament of Uganda from September 22 to 29, 2019, in Kampala, Uganda, was attended by over 500 parliamentarians and parliamentary clerks representing parliaments and legislatures from across the Commonwealth. The Conference was hosted by the CPA President (2018-2019), the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda.

The unique conference brings together speakers, members of Parliament and parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia. The CPA reaches all 53 countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, state, provincial and territorial parliaments and legislatures, bringing together over 180 CPA branches of the Association.

### **64<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Opening Addresses**

The opening ceremony began with the entry of a representative of each country. Senator Terry Mercer, as head of the Canadian Branch, represented Canada. All other delegates also attended the ceremony.

The Chief Guest at the opening of the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC was the President of the Republic of Uganda and Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), His Excellency Yoweri K. Museveni, who urged Commonwealth parliamentarians to uphold democratic principles and the values of the Commonwealth. The President of Uganda spoke of the Commonwealth having great potential through its common language and opportunities for cooperation on trade, culture and governance. The President of Uganda said that among the Commonwealth's greatest achievements are its democratic institutions and the fact that the huge population of the Commonwealth – 2.4 billion people – offers great opportunities to work together on trade, peace and democracy.

The President of Uganda also read the goodwill message to the Conference from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Head of the Commonwealth. Since 1989, the Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has traditionally been the head of state or government of the CPA branch hosting the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The CPA President (2018-2019), the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda; the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, the Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon; and Mr. Jarvis Matiya, Acting CPA Secretary-General for the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC, also spoke at the opening ceremony of the Conference. The vote of thanks on behalf of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff at the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC was given by the CPA Africa Region Chairperson, the Rt. Hon. Justin B. Muturi, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya.

### **64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

During the 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, attended by the Canadian delegates, future CPA governance meetings and conferences were discussed. The General Assembly confirmed that the 65<sup>th</sup> CPC will be hosted by the CPA Canada Region in Halifax, Nova

Scotia, Canada, from January 12 to 18, 2021. It will be the first time since 2004 that Canada is hosting the CPC. This is the result of a lot of work by the Canadian delegates, including the Canadian Branch delegates. Discussions at the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC focused on the possible hosting of the 66<sup>th</sup> CPC by the Ghana Branch and the Parliament of Ghana with further discussions planned.

The General Assembly approved the application from the National Assembly of The Gambia to reconstitute the Gambia Branch following their application to re-join.

At the end of the General Assembly, the CPA President, the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda; and the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, the Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, presented a gift to Ms. Alexandra Mendès, MP and member of the Canadian Federal Branch, in recognition of her work with the CPA as the Vice-Chairperson since November 2017. In her absence, Senator Woo accepted it on her behalf.

### **64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: CPA Officer Elections**

Several elections took place at the 64<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference:

**CPA Treasurer:** During the 64<sup>th</sup> CPA General Assembly, which took place at the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC in Uganda, members of the CPA endorsed the appointment of the Hon. Datuk Seri Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, MP (Malaysia), as the new CPA Treasurer.

**CPA Vice-Chairperson:** The 64<sup>th</sup> CPA General Assembly was followed by a meeting of the new CPA Executive Committee, during which the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, was confirmed by members of the Executive Committee to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee.

**Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson:** The Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, was elected Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP).

**CPA Small Branches Chairperson:** The Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands, was elected Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches.

### **64<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – Workshops:**

**Main conference theme: “*Adaption, engagement, and evolution of Parliaments in a rapidly changing Commonwealth*”**

Ten conference workshops were presented during the Conference. Two delegates of the Canadian Branch were invited to participate as discussion leaders at Workshop C and E.

## **Workshop C: The role of Parliament in facilitating persons with disabilities as electors, candidates and legislators**

The workshop, with Senator Marilou McPhedran as one of the discussion leaders, focused on the role of Parliament in facilitating persons with disabilities (PWDs) as electors, candidates and legislators. Despite constituting approximately 15% of the world's population, PWDs continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in governance and at all levels of decision making. Inclusive and representative parliaments are crucial to ensuring a healthy and fair democracy.

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a fundamental instrument for ensuring that PWDs participate in political process. Article 29 states that "Parties shall guarantee to PWDs political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake to ensure that PWDs can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for PWDs to vote and be elected."

Parliaments, through their roles of legislation, oversight and representation, should ensure effective and full participation of PWDs in public functions at all levels of governance.

The workshop *endorsed* the following six recommendations:

- **Legislatures should implement a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) following consultation with stakeholders, including removing barriers for legislators with disabilities to effectively perform their duties;**
- **Parliament must enact laws to eliminate all forms of discrimination against PWDs seeking political office, besides developing suitable access and other physical infrastructure in legislatures.**
- **Parliaments should ensure ratification of CRPD and seek to adopt CRPD's Optional Protocol to promote transparency and accountability in upholding rights of PWDs.**
- **Parliament should play a more proactive role in ensuring that the ratification of the CRPD by the State is translated into tangible outcomes.**
- **Parliaments should promote a legislative agenda that ensures all concerned are aware of and incorporate, the rights of citizens living with disabilities;**
- **The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) should form a disability network fully supported by the Association.**

## **Workshop E: Combatting rapid urbanization and rural decline – A challenge for the Commonwealth**

This session, with Senator Yuen Pau Woo as one of the discussion leaders, focused on the impact of rapid urbanization and rural decline in various jurisdictions within the Commonwealth. During the workshop, urbanization was defined as the shift from a rural to an urban area leading to large concentrations of people in towns and cities. It was highlighted that with over half of the world's population currently living in urban areas and a further 2.5 billion expected to be added to that population by 2050, urbanization and the concurrent rural decline will become an increasingly salient issue for leaders and policy makers in the coming years.

The major drivers of urbanization stated at the workshop include the search for economic opportunities, population growth, environmental degradation, and the desire for a change of lifestyle. The adverse effects of urbanization include overcrowding and slums, which experience major problems such as poverty, poor sanitation, unemployment and high crime rates.

It was further highlighted that urbanization challenges are unique and vary across countries and therefore home-based solutions should be adopted. In order to address urbanization challenges, it is critical that countries develop and adopt integrated plans to guarantee equitable and holistic development for both the rural and urban areas. Lastly, parliaments should adopt inclusive budgets with a focus on rural development.

The three recommendations at the workshop were **endorsed** as follows:

- **Parliaments should focus on building sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural communities that are unique to their needs and circumstances.**
- **CPA parliamentarians should support Commonwealth efforts to promote sustainable human settlements by partnering with locally elected leaders to frame policy for effective delivery at the local level.**
- **Rural and urban areas are complementary to each other. Parliaments should focus on the regulation of urbanization and the development of rural areas such as in India.**

The other workshops presented were the following:

### **Workshop A: Climate change: Achievements, challenges and efficacy of parliamentary interventions**

This session focused on the impacts of climate change and the interventions that Commonwealth parliaments are employing to address them. Legislatures are key stakeholders in this issue and should leverage their mandate to budget, appropriate, enact legislation and give oversight to the policy implementations required for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### **Workshop B: Innovation in Parliament: The impact of science and technology on how Parliament works today**

This workshop focused on how information and communications technology (ICT) can be integrated into parliaments as an enabler and tool for the promotion of openness, transparency and parliamentary outreach. This was accomplished through the sharing of country-specific examples and experiences in the use of ICT in Parliament. Delegates observed that technological engagement increases participation by citizens in the work of Parliament. Therefore, CPA branches are increasingly adopting new technologies. Various information tools used in selected parliaments to engage stakeholders were shared, including Hansard, websites, television, radio, special applications and social media platforms.

### **Workshop D (youth-related topic): Youth Roundtable: Strategies to deal with youth unemployment**

This workshop was chaired by the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda and featured young participants from a wide range of youth organizations. The Deputy Speaker highlighted three aspects of unemployment: unemployment, underemployment, and unemployability. The workshop focused on strategies to address increasing youth unemployment, which is a big challenge in most Commonwealth jurisdictions.

### **Workshop F (Small Branches topic): Innovation in Parliament: The possible effects of United Kingdom's "Brexit" on CPA Small Branches**

This workshop focused on the effects of "Brexit" on parliamentary procedures in the United Kingdom and how small parliaments can benefit and learn from the ramifications and strengthen the workings of their legislatures. A parliamentary clerk from the United Kingdom noted that the backbench MPs have taken control of the House of Commons order paper, thus shaping the "Brexit" discussions in the House.

### **Workshop G (Gender topic): Fostering a culture of respect, fairness and dignity: Sexual harassment has no place in legislatures**

This workshop topic was also discussed earlier at the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference (*see below*) and called for in-depth engagement. The first panelist from Scotland called for openness, fairness and equality among members and parliamentary staff, emphasizing a culture of respect catering to diversity, inclusiveness and adherence to the code of conduct. There had been an observed failure to report matters of sexual harassment by victims because of embarrassment and the impact on their careers.

### **Workshop H: The role of Parliament in the doctrine of separation of powers: Enhancing transparency and accountability**

During this workshop, the participants were provided with background highlighting the importance of the doctrine and the Commonwealth's efforts to popularize it. The development of the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles was noted as critical. The Chair's remarks focused on whether there was a need to update the principles and whether legislators were doing enough to ensure accountability and transparency in the executive and judiciary.

### **Workshop I: Post-legislative scrutiny (PLS) - a dimension of the oversight function of Parliament: How is this represented within different political systems?**

The workshop discussion centred on post-legislative scrutiny (PLS) as a vital tool for assessing the relevancy and quality of regulations and laws enacted in relation to the intended objectives. Parliaments across the Commonwealth take a variety of approaches to the PLS process, with some focusing more on legislation and less on post-legislative activities. However, they remain key engines of PLS.

### **Workshop J: How the updated CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures has been used to strengthen the capacity of CPA legislatures.**

This session focused on parliaments having a greater self-awareness of their performance based on the updated CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures. The CPA Benchmarks provide a framework for excellence in Commonwealth parliamentary and legislative practice.

### **37th CPA Small Branches Conference Theme: *“Adaption, engagement, and evolution of Parliaments in a rapidly changing Commonwealth.”***

With the increased logistical, financial and infrastructure demands facing small jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, parliamentarians met to examine the unique challenges they face. The 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference was held in Kampala, Uganda, with members of parliaments and legislatures from CPA Small Branches attending the Conference.

In the margins of the Conference, the initial cohort of the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee met for the first time, following the decision of the CPA Executive Committee at their Mid-Year Meeting in Mauritius in 2018 to form this new committee. The CPA Small Branches Steering Committee comprises the CPA Small Branches Chairperson and seven Commonwealth parliamentarians who represent the seven regions of the CPA with small branches: Africa; Australia; British Isles and the Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; Pacific; and South-East Asia. Even if our branch is not a member of Small Branches, Senator Salma Atallahjan represented the Canadian branches during the Steering Committee meeting.



**6<sup>th</sup> Triennial Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference:** *Overall theme: “CWP at 30 years: Achievements and Unfinished Business – Looking forward to the next 30 years”*

Senator Salma Ataullahjan, Senator Diane Griffin and Senator Marilou McPhedran joined over 100 women parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth in attending the 6<sup>th</sup> Triennial Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference, held ahead of the 64<sup>th</sup> CPC. The previous one had been held in London, UK, in December 2016. 2019 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CWP.

The theme of the CWP Conference was “*CWP at 30 years: Achievements and Unfinished Business – Looking forward to the next 30 years*” in recognition of the CWP’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019.

The CWP Conference was opened by the outgoing CWP Chairperson, the Hon. Dr. Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia). The CWP President, the Hon. Syda Namirembe Bbumba, MP (Uganda), spoke to the CWP Conference and the CWP Alumni Champion, Dr. Lesley Clark, a former member of Parliament of Queensland.

In recognition of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CWP in 2019, a special ceremony was held with the current and previous CWP chairpersons: the Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia, CWP Chairperson from 2106-2019); the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Uganda, 2013-2016); the Hon. Alix Boyd Knights, MHA, Speaker of the House of Assembly (Dominica, 2010-2013); Ms. Kashmala Tariq (Pakistan, 2007-2010); and the Hon. Lindiwe Maseko (South Africa, 2004-2007).

During the CWP Conference, four sessions were presented and attended by the Canadian delegation. The themes of the sessions were the following:

### **CWP Session 1: The importance of mentoring for new parliamentarians**

This workshop session focused on sustained mentoring as an effective strategy for increasing the influence of elected women leaders and the likelihood for their re-election. When framed with a gender equality agenda, women’s political mentoring programs can be an effective strategy for newly elected women MPs, particularly in the following areas: strengthening political skills, enhancing cross-party networks of women parliamentarians, strengthening links between women MPs and women’s rights movements, and deepening political ties across countries.

### **CWP Session 2: Promoting women to leadership positions and senior portfolios**

One of the participants highlighted the timeliness of the CWP conference theme of reflecting on 30 years of progress and of taking stock and planning for the future. The United Nations was recognized for its efforts in documenting the progress made by women political leaders and the development of conventions that have set benchmarks for women’s rights.

### **CWP Session 3: Empowering women as effective legislators in the 21st century**

This workshop session focused on empowering women as effective legislators in the 21st century. The Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda noted that training, inductions and capacity building should be enforced if the CWP is to see female MPs retained and increased in numbers in Commonwealth parliaments.

### **CWP Session 4: Combatting bullying and harassment within parliaments**

This workshop session focused on strategies to combat sexual harassment and bullying within parliaments, which has become common culture and a normalized behaviour.

Summaries were supplied by rapporteurs present at each workshop session. Copies of the complete workshop reports from the 64<sup>th</sup> CPA Conference from which excerpts have been taken in the preparation of this report are available online at <http://www.cpahq.org>.

### **Acknowledgement**

In conclusion, the delegates would like to express their appreciation to the Library of Parliament for the excellent background information they prepared for the use of the delegation during the Conference. Also, the delegation appreciated the assistance provided by Global Affairs Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Ratansi, M.P.  
Chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

## **Travel Costs\***

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Kampala, Uganda
<b>DATES</b>	September 22 to 29, 2019
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan Hon. Marc Gold Hon. Diane Griffin Hon. Terry Mercer Hon. Marilou McPhedran Hon. Victor Oh Hon. Donald Plett Hon. Yuen Pau Woo
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$27,874.56
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$15,110.70
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$3,607.02
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$222.61
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$1,803.54
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,618.43</b>

*\*Only expenses not reimbursed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are included.*