



Report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Bilateral Visit to Barbados and Saint Lucia

Bridgetown, Barbados and Castries, Saint Lucia

March 3 to 9, 2024

Report

A delegation from the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visited Barbados and Saint Lucia from March 3 to 9, 2024. Alexandra Mendès, M.P., Chair of the Branch, led the delegation composed of the Honourable Rosemarie Moodie, Senator, Marie-Hélène Gaudreau, M.P., and Carole Hughes, M.P. Accompanying the delegation was Andrew Lauzon, Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The Association's constitution encourages visits between member countries to give parliamentarians an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest in bilateral relations and matters related to the Commonwealth as a whole. The visit to Barbados and Saint Lucia aimed to strengthen ties with our partners in the Commonwealth Caribbean, in keeping with the Canadian Branch's mandate to facilitate twinning arrangements between Canada's provincial and territorial legislatures and the Caribbean.

The mission enabled Canadian parliamentarians to have constructive exchanges with their counterparts in Barbados and Saint Lucia, learn more about Canada's aid to the region and potential solutions to shared issues, while also reinforcing diplomatic relations in both countries.

1. BARBADOS

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Barbados is a state located in the southeastern Caribbean Sea.¹ The island has a total area of 431 square kilometers. It was claimed on behalf of King James I of England in 1625 and was one of the earliest colonies of the English (and subsequently British) Crown. Plantations soon became the centre of an important industry fuelled by the economic demand for sugar and the establishment of slavery.² In 1661, Barbados became the first English colony to pass the Slave Code institutionalizing slavery. Slavery formally ended in Barbados and other British colonies after the passing of the United Kingdom's *Slavery Abolition Act 1833*.³

Barbados gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1966, immediately rejoining the Commonwealth as a democratic nation.⁴ Following its independence, Barbados remained a constitutional monarchy for more than 50 years. However, against a backdrop of growing interest in and support for republicanism, the 2020 Throne Speech announced that it was time for Barbados to “fully leave [its] colonial past behind” and sever ties with the British monarchy.⁵ On 30 November 2021, Barbados officially became a parliamentary republic.

¹ Christopher Stewart Jackson, Anthony De Vere Phillips and Woodville K. Marshall, “[Barbados](#),” *Britannica*, 11 February 2024.

² A. Missouri Sherman-Peter, United Nations (UN), “[The Legacy of Slavery in the Caribbean and the Journey Towards Justice](#),” *UN Chronicle*, 24 March 2022.

³ Sir Hilary Beckles, “[On Barbados, the First Black Slave Society](#),” *Black Perspectives*, African American Intellectual History Society, 8 April 2017; and United Kingdom (U.K.), Sally Dray, [Britain and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#), Library Briefing, House of Lords Library, 1 August 2019.

⁴ U.K., [Barbados Independence Act 1966](#), 1966 c. 37.

⁵ Barbados Government Information Service, [Throne Speech Delivered September 15, 2020](#); Matt Qvortrup, “[Barbados: after four centuries under the British crown, former slave island looks to bright new republican future](#),” *The Conversation*, 30 November 2021; and Robert Goddard, “[Why does Barbados](#)

The country's current Constitution was adopted in 1966.⁶ However, on becoming a republic, Barbados established a Constitutional Reform Commission to oversee the development and enactment of a new Constitution.⁷ Appointed in June 2022 and originally scheduled to complete its work by September 2023, the Commission postponed the delivery of its report until at least early 2024.⁸ The last stage of the constitutional reform process will be the adoption of the new Constitution by Parliament.⁹

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The executive branch in Barbados comprises the President (the Most Honourable Dame Sandra Mason), the Prime Minister (the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley), and a 22-member Cabinet.¹⁰ The President serves as head of state and is elected by an Electoral College of both Houses of Parliament for term of four years, renewable once.¹¹ The President appoints the leader of the largest party in Parliament as Prime Minister and head of government. The President also appoints the Cabinet on the advice of the Prime Minister. The current Cabinet is composed of seven women, including the Prime Minister. President Mason was the last Governor-General before the country became a republic.

First elected in 2018, Prime Minister Mottley was re-elected in January 2022. She also holds the position of Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, Culture, Security, Public Service, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Development Commissions.¹² Prime Minister Mottley is the lead CARICOM Head of Government responsible for the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. She served as the Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) between January 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020.

Barbados has a bicameral national parliament. The Senate (Upper Chamber) is composed of 21 senators serving five-year terms, 12 of whom are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, seven by the President, and two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.¹³ The House of Assembly (Lower Chamber) has 30 members directly elected under a first-past-the-post system for five-year terms in single-seat constituencies.

The party winning the most seats in the House of Assembly becomes the governing party. The most recent elections in Barbados were held on January 19, 2022, from which the

[symbolic transition to a republic matter](#)," *LSE Latin America and Caribbean*, The London School of Economics and Political Science blog, 13 January 2022.

⁶ Organization of American States, [The Constitution of Barbados](#).

⁷ Cynthia Barrow-Giles et Rico Yearwood, "[The Constitutional Reform Commission of Barbados: Much Expectation, Great Skepticism](#)," *ConstitutionNet*, International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), 12 August 2022; and BLP News, "[Constitutional Reform Commission Official Launch 24th June 22](#)," YouTube, June 2022.

⁸ Emmanuel Joseph, « [In Barbados, submission of constitutional reform commission's report postponed until 2024](#) », *ConstitutionNet*, International IDEA, 25 August 2023; and Emmanuel Joseph, "[Report of Constitutional Reform Commission delayed until 2024](#)," *Barbados Today*, 23 August 2023.

⁹ UN Human Rights Council, [National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 and 16/21: Advance Version](#), 7 March 2023.

¹⁰ The Constitution of Barbados stipulates that Cabinet must have no fewer than five members. This number does not include the prime minister.

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "[Barbados](#)," *The World Factbook*, Database, accessed 13 February 2024.

¹² Organization of American States, [Member State: Barbados](#).

¹³ Barbados Integrated Government, [The Senate](#).

Barbados Labour Party (BLP) led by Prime Minister Mottley since 2008, was re-elected winning all 30 seats for a second time. In February 2024, just prior to the delegation's arrival in Barbados, Ralph Thorne, M.P., crossed the floor to join the Democratic Labour Party and assumed the position of Leader of the Opposition.¹⁴

These recent elections were considered free and fair.¹⁵ However, turnout decreased to a record low of 41.7%.¹⁶ The next general elections are due to take place by 2027.

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Early in her first mandate, Prime Minister Mottley launched the four-year Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) Plan to restore macroeconomic and debt stability with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The country has recently reached another agreement with the IMF for a new BERT Programme for which it may get access to about US\$110 million over three years.

Barbados was the first country to access the IMF's new Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST), to which Canada contributed \$2.4B. This RST aims to provide affordable, long-term financing to non-ODA eligible countries vulnerable to climate change to help build resilience against climate change. The IMF predicts a 4.9% growth for 2023 and a 3.9% growth for 2024. According to IMF estimates for 2023, Barbados' gross debt and net debt as a percentage of GDP was 115% and 114.1% respectively.

Barbados faces challenges in implementing certain international standards in the financial sector. Although the country was removed from the EU's grey list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions in February 2022, it remains on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list for deficiencies in countering money laundering and terrorist financing.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Canada and Barbados have enjoyed strong and positive relations since the island nation gained independence from the UK in 1966. Canada and Barbados are generally like-minded and collaborate on a range of issues in regional and international forums. Our rich cooperation is built on shared values, trade and investment, and strong people-to-people ties, including tourism and educational exchanges.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau co-chairs the UN Secretary General's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocates Group for 2022-2024 with Prime Minister Mottley and the two leaders collaborate on shared priorities. On October 19, 2023, both leaders hosted a live streamed SDG town hall at George Brown college in Toronto.

MEETINGS IN BARBADOS

Briefing by H.E. Lilian Chatterjee, High Commissioner for Canada in Barbados and Saint Lucia

Upon arrival, the delegation received a briefing from H.E. Lilian Chatterjee, Canada's High Commissioner for Barbados and Saint Lucia. In addition to personal security information,

¹⁴ Caribbean National Weekly, "[Ralph Thorne takes the helm as Opposition Leader in Barbados](#)," 13 February 2024

¹⁵ United States (U.S.), Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Barbados](#).

¹⁶ Freedom House, "[Barbados](#)," *Freedom in the World* 2023.

the delegation was provided with an overview of the program for the visit to Barbados and Saint Lucia. The High Commissioner also shared information about important recent political events in both countries.

Visit to the Parliament of Barbados

The delegation was welcomed to the Parliament by Pedro Eastmond, Clerk of the Parliament; Beverley Gibbons, Deputy Clerk; and Wayne Jones, Marshall of Parliament.

The delegation participated in a roundtable with Hon. Reginald Farley, Senator, President of the Senate (and former High Commissioner to Canada from 2018 to 2020); Hon. Arthur Holder, M.P., Speaker of the House of Assembly; Hon. Elizabeth Thompson, Senator, Deputy President of the Senate; Cynthia Forde, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the House; Edmund Hinkson, M.P., Chair of the Standing Committee on Governance and Policy Matters; and newly appointed Opposition Senator Tricia Watson. The meeting highlighted the close ties between Canada and Barbados. A number of issues were discussed, including the significant role of the Barbadian and Caribbean diaspora in Canada, the impacts of climate change and the Bridgetown Initiative, the value of educational exchanges, opportunities to cooperate to enhance the Barbados Parliament, and the vital role of the opposition.

The delegation also observed a sitting of the House of Assembly and met with Hon. Kerrie Symmonds, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Meeting with the Hon. Justice (retired) Christopher Blackman, Chairman of the Constitutional Reform Commission

During the meeting, Justice Blackman spoke about the work of the [Barbados Constitutional Reform Commission](#) and its mandate, which he noted includes the development of a new draft constitution to be provided to Cabinet. He also explained that a broad consultation was carried out, both in Barbados and abroad. Justice Blackman shared that the Commission's report is almost complete. The Commission has, however, decided to postpone its submission until June of this year due to recent political events, notably that of a member crossing the floor to represent an opposition party in Parliament. Additionally, Justice Blackman expressed gratitude to Canada for providing funding to the Commission through a broader regional justice sector project, which covered outreach visits to the diaspora in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. He commented that at the outset of the reform process, the Commission was unaware of the magnitude of the task they were undertaking. He also emphasized the need for greater civic education in Barbados, noting that many members of the general population lack familiarity with parliamentary reform processes and the intricacies of adopting a new constitution.

Visit to the Caribbean Regional Logistics Hub and Centre of Excellence

The delegation visited the Caribbean Regional Logistics Hub and Centre of Excellence, one of the Canada-funded initiatives in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. The site was officially launched in Barbados in August 2022¹⁷ and construction is ongoing. The

¹⁷ World Food Programme, "[Upcoming logistics hub in Barbados to enhance emergency response across the Caribbean](#)," 11 August 2022.

delegation met with representatives of the World Food Programme and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to gain a better understanding of the purpose of the initiative. Funded by Canada, the United States and the European Union, the logistics hub will be the central location for the facilitation of coordinated efforts and responses in the event of emergencies and for stockpiling of emergency equipment. It will also include a training centre to ensure skills exist in the region to maximize use of the hub facilities. CDEMA is a critical partner in this initiative and is the regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community.

The visit allowed the delegation to see firsthand how Canada is supporting the region. The organizers are hopeful that the site will be functional before the upcoming hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to November 30. At present, humanitarian response supplies are pre-positioned in four sub-regional warehouses, one of which is in Barbados, but space is limited, and logistical capacity challenges exist. Over time, the operations of the new regional hub will be ceded to CDEMA as its capacity grows. Canada has provided support to disaster management in the region for over 30 years and pledged \$100 million to strengthen climate resilience following the 2017 hurricanes that severely impacted several Caribbean islands.

Briefings at the Canadian High Commission

The delegation received briefings on trade and development engagement and programming in the region, including the Caribbean Development Bank, from Marthe Lemay, Counsellor (Commercial) and Senior Trade Commissioner; David Simard, First Secretary; and Dorothee Roy, Second Secretary. Through these briefings, the delegates gained tremendous insight into the main challenges and opportunities for Barbados and the other Eastern Caribbean countries.

Gathering to discuss Regional Security Perspectives

H.E. Lilian Chatterjee hosted a small gathering at the Official Residence that provided the delegation with an opportunity to exchange with visiting members of the Canadian Armed Forces currently engaged in Exercise Tradewinds, an annual regional security cooperation exercise taking place in Barbados this year. The delegation also met with leaders and senior officials from the Regional Security System (RSS), the Barbados Defence Force and CDEMA. The encounters provided the delegation with information on security cooperation and disaster preparedness in the Caribbean, while also highlighting Canada's longstanding relationships with these regional partners.

Meeting with Dr. Nigel Taylor, Barbados Ombudsman

The delegation met with Dr. Nigel Taylor to learn about role of the [Office of the Ombudsman in Barbados](#). The Ombudsman's mandate is "to provide quality service in an impartial and expeditious manner while investigating complaints by Barbadians or persons residing in Barbados who consider that the conduct of a Government, Ministry, Department or Statutory Authority is unreasonable, improper, inadequate or unjust, thereby ensuring protection of individual rights and liberties against bureaucratic wrongdoing and the effects of maladministration." The Office reports to the President of Barbados and presents its findings to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate with the goal of "alleviating and correcting measures" through Parliament. The

delegation learned that investigations can take three to four months and are procedure heavy.

Dr. Taylor informed the delegation that when his office receives complaints that fall outside of its jurisdiction, he will often refer individuals to the appropriate respondents, such as the police. The Ombudsman also explained that a high number of complaints are addressed to his office rather than through constituency offices as Barbadians feel that their complaints must be addressed “by a ranking person.”

2. SAINT LUCIA

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Saint Lucia is a small island state located in the Caribbean Sea, 175 km northwest of the island of Barbados.¹⁸ Its capital, Castries, is the largest city. While English is the nation’s only official language, French Creole, which emerged the 17th century, is spoken by most of the population.¹⁹

Saint Lucia’s first inhabitants were the Arawaks, believed to have come from South America.²⁰ Caribs gradually began populating the island during the period around the 8th century A.D. Residents of Carib descent can still be found in Saint Lucia today.²¹ At the beginning of the 16th century, the island changed possession between the French and English empires several times until the 18th century²², when it was ceded to the British through the *Treaty of Paris* in 1763.²³ Slaves were brought to Saint Lucia to work on sugar cane plantations. Slavery was abolished in 1834.²⁴

Saint Lucia remained a British colony until its independence from the United Kingdom in 1979. It rejoined the Commonwealth the same year. Following its independence, it remained a constitutional monarchy.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Saint Lucia is a constitutional monarchy and a democracy based on a multiparty system. Its current Constitution was adopted in 1978 and was most recently revised in 2023²⁵ when parliament adopted constitutional amendments to replace the London Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice as the nation’s final and highest court.²⁶

The executive branch comprises the Governor General, the Prime Minister and the cabinet.²⁷

¹⁸ Britannica, [Saint Lucia](#).

¹⁹ BBC News, [St Lucia country profile](#).

²⁰ Saint Lucia Electoral Department, [History of Saint Lucia](#).

²¹ Saint Lucia Tourism Authority, [A Brief History of Saint Lucia](#).

²² Britannica, [Saint Lucia](#).

²³ Britannica, [Treaty of Paris](#).

²⁴ Britannica, [History of Saint Lucia](#); Antislavery In Domestic Legislation, [Saint Lucia](#).

²⁵ Attorney General’s Chambers, [Revised Laws of Saint Lucia \(2021\) – Constitution of Saint Lucia](#) (MOST RECENT DOCUMENT AVAILABLE).

²⁶ Government of Saint Lucia, [Saint Lucia accedes to CCJ](#). Sherrylyn Clarke, “[In Saint Lucia, parliament passes constitutional amendment to replace Privy Council with Caribbean Court of Justice as final court of appeal](#),” *ConstitutionNet*, 2 March 2023.

²⁷ The Constitution stipulates that Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister and the other Ministers.

The Head of State is represented by the Governor General, a position currently held by Cyril Errol Melchiades Charles. Following a general election, the Governor General appoints the leader of the majority party as Prime Minister and head of government and the leader of the second-place party as the Leader of the Opposition.

First elected in 1997 under the banner of the Saint Lucia Labour Party, Philip J. Pierre has held various ministerial positions under successive Labour governments. He became the leader of the party in June 2016 and the leader of the Opposition during the same period. He was re-elected in 2021 and appointed Prime Minister after his party returned to power.

The Cabinet is currently composed of 15 ministers. It consists of the Prime Minister and the other ministers as outlined under section 61 of the Constitution.²⁸ Three women hold positions in the cabinet. The current Prime Minister also serves as Minister for Finance, Economic Development, and the Youth Economy.²⁹

Saint Lucia has a bicameral national parliament composed of a lower and upper chamber. The Senate (upper chamber) is composed of 11 senators appointed by the Governor General to serve a five-year term.³⁰ Of these 11 senators, six are appointed on the advice of the prime minister, three on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and two by the Governor General following consultation with religious, economic or social bodies or associations.³¹ The President of the Senate is the Honourable Alvina Reynolds, who has held the position since 2023. The House of Assembly (lower chamber) consists of 18 members directly elected under a first-past-the-post system for five-year terms in single-seat constituencies, and a speaker elected by the members. The Honourable Claudius Francis has served as Speaker since August 2021.

The Prime Minister may call a general election at any time.³² The party winning the most seats in the House of Assembly becomes the governing party. The most recent elections were held on July 26, 2021, more than five years after those held on June 6, 2016. The Saint Lucia Labour Party, led by Philip J. Pierre as its chairman since 2016³³, was elected with 13 seats and over 50% of the vote. It replaced the United Workers Party, which had been in power since 2016. These 2021 elections were considered free and fair. The voter turnout was 51%.³⁴

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Saint Lucia's GDP grew by 14.9% in 2022, and is projected to increase by 3% in 2023 and 2.4% in 2024. Saint Lucia's development challenges include a limited resource and export base, a lack of economic diversification, limited government capacity, costly provision of public services, as well as severe debt sustainability issues. Saint Lucia was dramatically impacted by the economic

²⁸ Attorney General's Chambers, [Revised Laws of Saint Lucia \(2021\) – Constitution of Saint Lucia](#) (MOST RECENT DOCUMENT AVAILABLE).

²⁹ Government of Saint Lucia, [Office of the Prime Minister](#).

³⁰ Saint Lucia Electoral System, [Overview of the Electoral System](#).

³¹ Saint Lucia Electoral Department, [Parliament](#).

³² Saint Lucia Electoral Department, [Election Basics](#).

³³ Office of the Prime Minister, [The Honourable Philip J. Pierre](#).

³⁴ Freedom House, « [Saint Lucia](#) », Freedom in the World 2023.

fall-out from COVID-19, as tourism accounted for 50% of its GDP in 2018. However, this industry rebounded in 2022, like in several other CARICOM countries. Other important sectors are manufacturing and agriculture. Since 2016, the country has been operating a Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP) that allows foreign nationals to obtain citizenship by investing in the country. In 2022, Saint Lucia banned Russian and Belarusian applicants from the program in response to the war in Ukraine.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Saint Lucia is a longstanding and like-minded partner on most issues. Canada and Saint Lucia actively collaborate bilaterally and in multilateral forums on issues of mutual importance, from climate change to regional security. In June 2023, Saint Lucia passed the presidency of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to Canada.

Bilateral consultations were held virtually in February 2021 at the senior officials' level, with the former Foreign Affairs Minister of Saint Lucia in attendance. Following these bilateral consultations, a joint Roadmap for Action was elaborated, which focuses on addressing programming gaps related to climate change, gender equality, and justice sectors.

Saint Lucia submitted a formal request to Canada to establish a High Commission in Ottawa in October 2022 for an opening in the summer of 2023, which was approved by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 9, 2023. This decision and related next steps have been communicated to the Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation and Diaspora Affairs of Saint Lucia.

MEETINGS IN SAINT LUCIA

Visit to the Parliament of Saint Lucia

The delegation was welcomed to Parliament by Hon. Alvina Reynolds, President of the Senate; Hon. Claudius Francis, the Speaker of the House of Assembly; and Esmalene Cox-Jn Louis, Clerk of Parliament. Hon. Jeremiah Norbert, outgoing Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly and newly appointed Minister, was also in attendance. During the meeting, the discussion focused on the sharing of best practices, exploring twinning opportunities between Caribbean parliaments and Canadian provincial and territorial legislatures, and fostering future collaboration through training initiatives for parliamentary staff. Furthermore, the participants spoke about the representation of women in parliament and politics. Senator Moodie highlighted Canada's achievement of gender parity in its federal cabinet for the first time in 2015, as well as in the Senate. She expressed Canada's continued pride in implementing affirmative action measures to support gender equality. Speaker Francis noted that Saint Lucia ranks third worldwide for women in leadership positions.

Meeting with Hon. Alva Baptiste, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation, and Diaspora Affairs

Ms. Mendès, as head of delegation, opened the meeting by thanking Minister Baptiste for making time to meet with the delegation, to which he responded, "Saint Lucia is never too busy to make time for friends." During the discussion, the Minister emphasized the crucial role of global cooperation in addressing climate change and stressed the significance of reevaluating the terms and conditions of support provided by wealthy nations to poorer

countries during climate crises. Further discussions took place regarding Canada's visa policies, with Minister Baptiste expressing a desire to see Canada eliminate visas altogether for Saint Lucia nationals, despite Canada's expanded electronic travel authorization program for eligible citizens. Additionally, the group discussed the current and complex global geopolitical landscape, including conflicts in the Middle East and the territorial dispute between Venezuela and Guyana over the Essequibo region.

Working dinner with Hon. Allen Chastanet, former Prime Minister of Saint Lucia and current Leader of the Opposition

The delegation hosted Hon. Allen Chastanet, former Prime Minister (2016 to 2021) and current Leader of the Opposition, for a working dinner. During the meeting, he affirmed his commitment to public service, focusing on the critical role of the opposition in parliament. He shared that transitioning from Prime Minister to Leader of the Opposition was a great learning experience that provided him many new insights. He also expressed his interest in establishing a Leader of the Opposition Advocacy Group in the Caribbean to ensure that the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, and CARICOM would hear opposition voices, which he believes are often overlooked. The meeting provided the delegation with additional insight into the functioning of Saint Lucia's parliament, with discussion on parliamentary committees and the application of parliamentary privilege. Throughout the discussions, Mr. Chastanet reaffirmed his position as a friend and ally of Canada.

Visit to the Alliance Française Saint Lucia

The delegation's visit to [Alliance Française Saint Lucia](#) was marked by the donation of books by French-Canadian authors. During the visit, members of the delegation also had the opportunity to observe local students learning French and interact with them. Furthermore, the delegation held discussions with Sophie Picavet, Director of the Alliance Française Saint Lucia and General Delegate of the French Alliances of the Eastern Caribbean; Marcia Symphorien, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie's representative in Saint Lucia; and Domenico Ditaranto, First Counsellor of the French Embassy.

Meeting with Lesley Saunderson, Resident British Commissioner to Saint Lucia

Lesley Saunderson, Resident British Commissioner to Saint Lucia, welcomed the delegation to Saint Lucia. During the meeting, participants discussed areas of mutual interest, including regional security, human rights and the Commonwealth connection. Ms. Mendès and Ms. Saunderson also discussed the annual Westminster Seminar scheduled to take place in the UK the following week. The meeting provided the delegation with an opportunity to hear the perspective of a likeminded diplomatic mission in the region.

Visit to the Girls of a Feather Headquarters

On International Women's Day, the delegation was invited to the Saint Lucian headquarters of [Girls of a Feather](#) (GOAF), a non-profit mentorship organization whose programs are designed to educate girls about the importance of self-awareness while incorporating elements of feminist movement building in the context of the Caribbean. As part of the event, Ms. Mendès presented certificates to several GOAF volunteers who

completed case management training with the University of the West Indies as part of the [Girls with Goals](#) project, which was funded through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives.

CONCLUSION

During its time in Barbados and Saint Lucia, the delegation engaged in a series of activities to foster cooperation with parliamentarians and reinforce diplomatic relations. The program included meetings with the presiding officers of both parliaments, high-level discussions with ministers, opposition leaders and parliamentary officials, as well as engagements with a wide range of other interlocutors, where many important issues were discussed. The visit deepened the delegation's understanding of mutual interests and regional challenges and highlighted the strength of relations and partnerships between the Canadian Parliament and Commonwealth Caribbean legislatures. It also underscored the importance of working together to bolster democracy and inclusive governance in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The delegation would like to thank H.E. Lilian Chatterjee, Canada's High Commissioner in Barbados and Saint Lucia, for her hospitality, as well as the dedicated staff of the High Commission for preparing a very comprehensive program and for providing hands on support during the visit. The delegates would also like to thank the representatives of Global Affairs Canada and the Library of Parliament who helped prepare the necessary background information.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexandra Mendès, M.P.

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Barbados and Saint Lucia
DESTINATION	Bridgetown, Barbados and Castries, Saint Lucia
DATES	March 3 to 9, 2024
DELEGATION	

SENATE	Hon. Rosemary Moodie
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Marie-Hélène Gaudreau Carol Hughes Alexandra Mendès
STAFF	Andrew Lauzon
TRANSPORTATION	\$15,883.13
ACCOMMODATION	\$11,807.19
HOSPITALITY	\$1,897.97
PER DIEMS	\$8,056.11
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,041.25
MISCELLANEOUS	\$22.00
TOTAL	\$38,707.66