



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation to the Bilateral Visit to
Providenciales and Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos
and Georgetown, Guyana**

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

**Providenciales and Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos
and Georgetown, Guyana
February 7 to 14, 2016**

Report

A delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) visited Turks and Caicos and Georgetown, Guyana from February 7 – 14, 2016. The Canadian Branch was represented by the following delegation:

- Ms. Alexandra Mendes, MP, Leader of the delegation;
- The Honourable Elizabeth Hubley, Senator;
- Todd Doherty, M.P.

The delegation was assisted by Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The objectives of the visit to the Caribbean are based on the Caribbean Twinning Initiative, a project launched by the CPA Canadian Branch and endorsed by all provinces and territories across Canada in July 2012. The project aims to provide a framework that allows the legislatures of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to establish working relationships with legislatures in the Commonwealth Caribbean, along the lines of those undertaken between the Australian and the Pacific regions of CPA. The purpose of the project would be to increase cooperation between parliaments, including the sharing of ideas and best practices.

A. Visit to the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

The Turks and Caicos Islands are a United Kingdom Overseas Territory, with the Queen represented by the Governor, currently Peter Beckingham. The British Government is responsible for defence, foreign affairs, internal security and offshore finance. In 2009, self-rule was suspended by the UK due to rampant political corruption through the tenure of two consecutive premiers resulting in direct rule by the Governor.

With the establishment of a new constitution and a series of governance and financial reforms, elections were held in November 2012 to contest 10 constituency seats and five national-level seats. The Progressive National Party (PNP), under the leadership of Dr. Rufus Ewing, won eight seats. He campaigned on a pro-independence platform and has since confirmed his interest in seeing the territory secede from Britain.

The United Kingdom has remained involved in the local administration of Turks and Caicos in an effort to protect its 170\$ Million USD rescue loan agreed to in February 2011. At the time of the visit, it was expected that the loan would be completely paid out by February 22, 2016. The United Kingdom has been keen to let the governments govern themselves without interference whenever possible and great gains have been made by the Government of the Turks and Caicos to establish a stronger economy while maintaining a vibrant democracy.

Canada established relations with Turks and Caicos in 1982, given its already strong relationship with the United Kingdom. Canadian presence has since that time

dramatically increased, and includes professionals, retired persons and tourists. Its main economy drivers are tourism and offshore financial services.

Meeting with His Excellency the Governor Peter Beckingham:

The role of the Governor, in representing the Queen, includes providing assent to Bills, although assent may be disallowed by the Secretary of State. The Constitution reserves for the Governor the responsibility for defence, foreign affairs, regulation of international financial services and internal security, including the police force and public appointments. Also with the prior approval of the Secretary of State, the Governor may enact legislation without the support of Cabinet or the House of Assembly in order to assure compliance with international obligations, secure funds for the operation of the House of Assembly or implement recommendations of the Electoral Boundary Commission.

The delegation informed the Governor of the purpose of the visit, in looking to formalize the twinning agreement between Turks and Caicos and Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island as Canada's smallest province in size and population, has significantly contributed to Canada's cultural, economic, and political development in a myriad of ways. It is a leading producer of agriculture and fisheries products and has a strong tourism trade, demonstrating areas where TCI and PEI could cooperate. It was suggested that the legislatures could identify projects that would be of mutual benefit, including the possibility of introducing a hansard system at the TCI Legislature.

Meeting with the Premier The Honourable Dr. Rufus Ewing:

The Premier had met with the CPA Canada Branch in Ottawa on a visit in May of 2015 at which time the prospect of having Turks and Caicos twin with a Canadian province or territory was discussed. The Premier had expressed interest in participating at that time and the visit to Turks and Caicos by a Canadian delegation was the ideal opportunity to reinforce the interest on both sides in continuing discussions. The potential areas for cooperation between Prince Edward Island and Turks and Caicos were discussed specifically and included not only areas associated with parliamentary cooperation but also tourism, culinary initiatives, agriculture, fisheries, energy and cultural and academic exchanges.

It was noted that Canada has followed Australia's model of twinning legislatures designed to deepen exchanges and collaboration on joint parliamentary initiatives.

They remarked on the similarities of both systems, as based on the Westminster model stating that much could be gained through cooperation in sharing of best practices related to parliamentary procedure, as well as the training of parliamentarians and dedicated staff.

It was suggested that a draft Memorandum of Understanding be reviewed as a means to move forward on the twinning initiative that both Parliaments could eventually sign once mutually agreed upon.

Meeting with the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Sharlene Robinson:

The Leader of the Opposition endorsed with enthusiasm the twinning project between Prince Edward Island and the Turks and Caicos, stating that the exchange would foster opportunities not only from a legislative perspective but also in the areas of fishing, agriculture, education, culinary initiatives and tourism. It was expressed that both jurisdictions have much in common and it would be important to match needs with opportunities in both jurisdictions.

She stated that Turks and Caicos has especially in the area of agriculture, much to learn from agriculturally rich Prince Edward island, given that all TCI food is imported. Fish farming would also be an important consideration as they move forward in the twinning project.

Meeting with the Twinning Project Team:

The delegation was informed that Canadians have invested in the Turks and Caicos in the areas of resort properties, health, airport facilities and power utilities. Several financial services firms are also owned and operated by Canadians. Since the visit of Prime Minister Robert Borden to the Turks and Caicos in 1917, Canada has expressed an interest in an economic or political partnership. As an associate member of CARICOM, the Island benefits from Canada's Caribbean Regional Development program which focuses on disaster management, tax reform and distance education. It was expressed that Canada could be helpful in providing assistance in making the Turks and Caicos and the wider Caribbean region more self-sufficient in growing crops to support its agricultural and food security needs, with the idea that Cuba would become the principal agricultural producer for the wider Caribbean region.

Meeting with Members of the House of Assembly:

The delegation members had the opportunity to meet in the House of Assembly Chamber with the members, who were also all members of the Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. During this meeting, the leader of the delegation, Ms. Alexandra Mendes had the unique opportunity to address all Members while the Chamber was in sitting.

Ms. Mendes highlighted the strength and value of the Commonwealth in forging the friendships and alliances that will allow both sides to confront any challenge – political, economic, or of any sort – together.

To galvanize the Commonwealth in meeting global challenges, she stated, one must first ensure that the institutional and personal connections to allow for both legislatures to learn from each other, to support each other and to assist each other when overcoming adversity.

The CPA offers this unique opportunity to build on existing partnerships and to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy and collaboration among our institutions. In this regard, Canada is a founding member of the CPA and proud of the opportunities it

offers to establish, expand, and revitalize alliances with its Commonwealth partners, such as Turks and Caicos.

Such interparliamentary initiatives are a natural extension of the strong trading and investment relations Canada has maintained with Caribbean nations for many decades and, in some cases, many centuries.

The contrasts between Canada and its Caribbean Commonwealth partners seem quite vast. Differences in geography, culture, and climate – especially palpable during Canada’s long winter season – are stark. Yet, through the work to formalize parliament-to-parliament relationships, resulting in the sharing of resources and knowledge, and encouraged educational experiences, such endeavours demonstrate the numerous similarities.

Such a twinning partnership would also build on the parliamentary relationship already in place between Canada and Turks and Caicos. By meeting face to face, parliamentarians in both Canada and the Turks and Caicos become aware of the similar challenges, and that through further collaboration, may be in a better position to identify common solutions. It was suggested that the establishment of a Hansard service would be most beneficial to the Legislature of the Turks and Caicos as a project to explore once the agreement has been ratified by both legislatures.

Visit to InterHealth Canada:

The delegation had the opportunity to visit the InterHealth facilities during the visit. Following an international competition between several European and North American healthcare providers, Toronto based InterHealth Canada was awarded a 25 year contract to build and operate two full-service hospitals in the Turks and Caicos. The facilities, located on Providenciales and Grand Turk respectively, provide primary and secondary healthcare services, diagnostics, emergency services, physiotherapy and rehabilitation, dentistry and laboratory services. Both sites serve the local population and visitors across the Turks and Caicos Islands and have built-in capacity to double in size.

B: Visit to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

The purpose of the bilateral visit to Guyana was to determine the willingness of the National Assembly of Guyana to enter into a parliamentary partnership agreement with the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The delegation had the opportunity to bring with it a letter from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the Honourable Linda Reid, expressing the will of the legislature to seek the approval of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Guyana, the Honourable Dr. Barton Scotland to begin exploring the possibility and engaging in talks to lead to a formalization of such an agreement.

Guyana is governed by three separate, but complementary branches of Government: the legislature, the Executive and the judiciary. The Assembly is unicameral and

consisting of 65 seats. Twenty-five members are elected by proportional representation from 10 geographic constituencies and an additional 40 members are chosen by proportional representation from the national party lists named by the political parties. The selection is based on the block votes secured. All members serve for 5 years.

The selection is based on the Hare Quota, whereby the quota for geographic representation is established by dividing the number of seats assigned to that constituency. The National Top Up seats are established by dividing the total number of votes cast in the country by the total number of seats in the National Assembly. Seats are first assigned to candidates receiving sufficient votes to fulfil the quota after which the largest remainder formula is applied for the rest of the seats, both at the constituency and national levels. Thirty-three percent of the seats or special seats, based on gender representation, are reserved in the National Assembly for women. Moreover, the Elections law prescribes that the top-up list for each respective party must have a minimum of one-third female.

The current configuration in Parliament is as such: the Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change (AFC) Coalition have 33 seats, and the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP) has 32 seats.

Guyana's last election was held on May 16, 2015. By less than a margin of 1%, the APNU – AFC coalition removed from power the PPP, the traditional Indo-Guyanese party, for the first time since 1992, resulting in a slim margin of victory, translating into a one seat difference in the legislature. The slim margin, as well as ethnic tensions drawn on party lines remains constantly relevant in the continuing political process.

Meeting with the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana:

His Excellency David Grainger was sworn in as the 8th Executive President on May 16, 2015. During the meeting he noted the strong spirit of collaboration between Canada and Guyana, expressing in particular that Canada is the largest source of foreign direct investment, as well as the largest investor in the extractive industry with over 12 Canadian companies active in sectors such as gold, oil and gas, manganese, uranium and other precious metals. With the delegation having the opportunity to visit the Aurora gold mine operations as part of the program, he stated that Canadian companies have been instrumental in working together with the local communities to support and develop sustainable and environmentally conscious extractive operations as part of a strong ethic in corporate social responsibility.

The President noted that for the first time in Guyana's history, a multi-ethnic party – coalition had won the presidential and regional elections in May 2015, unseating the People's Progressive Party (PPP) after 23 years in power. The international community, including Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom along with international observers attended as election observers, ensuring that the elections were free and fair.

The delegation stated its purpose in visiting Guyana to establish a parliamentary partnership between the legislatures of Guyana and British Columbia. This initiative was well received by the President, citing that possible areas of collaboration could include the training of parliamentarians, orientation sessions for newly elected members, as well

as the training of parliamentary staff. He also noted that the Parliamentary Library is in need of permanent librarians and researchers to support the work of the Legislature and its committees. He also stated that at this point, Members of the National Assembly serve on a part-time basis with members often travelling great distances to attend in the Chamber. Members receive no budget other than travel and per diem expenses.

The delegation informed the President of the invitation extended by the Parliament of Canada to invite a parliamentary staffer to Ottawa to participate in the Parliamentary Officers Study Program (POSP), as well as two parliamentarians to participate in the 13th Canadian Commonwealth Seminar.

Meeting with the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Honourable Dr. Barton Scotland:

The delegation then met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Honourable Dr. Barton Scotland and delivered to him greetings on behalf of the Honourable Linda Reid, Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia had expressed interest in developing a parliamentary partnership with the National Assembly of Guyana and the proposal was considered favourably by the Speaker. The Speaker was also pleased to receive the invitation by the Parliament of Canada to include a parliamentary officer as part of its POSP program and two parliamentarians as part of its Commonwealth Seminar series. The delegation expressed its interest in observing the budget debate taking place that afternoon in the Legislative Chamber.

Meeting with the Ministers of Indigenous Affairs:

The delegation members had the opportunity to meet with the Honourable Sydney Allicock, Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and the Honourable Mrs. Valerie Garrido-Lowe, Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. Guyana indigenous populations officially make up 11% of the population, although there are many more undocumented indigenous people in Guyana. Guyana's challenge with respect to its indigenous peoples lies in its isolated regions, and in its enormous task of ensuring adequate environmental protection and climate change strategies. A large component of this would centre around a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement on the part of mining industries operating in Guyana with a view that Canadian expertise in this respect would be invaluable in ensuring a greater quality of life for Guyana's aboriginal peoples. It was expressed that the twinning initiative between the parliaments of British Columbia and Guyana could include as one of its tenets a sharing of best practices regarding the need for equality and accountability for their respective First Nations communities, with British Columbia sharing its numerous successes in this regard.

Meeting with the Minister of Communities:

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with the Honourable Ronald Bulkan, Minister of Communities whose responsibilities include the holding of Local Government elections on March 18, 2016 after an absence of over 2 years. It should be noted that Mr. Bulkan participated in the Canadian Parliamentary Commonwealth seminar while he served in Opposition in June of 2013.

The delegation expressed its support for the holding of these elections, viewing it as an important component of Guyana's democracy. Guyana had not held local elections since 1994, and the institutions and practice of local governance had radically diminished. The Minister himself expressed that the elections for 71 councils across Guyana would do much to strengthen the governance structure at the local level, which in turn would serve to bring about a greater social cohesion not only locally but nationally as well. It was stated that these elections are the most important event to take place in Guyana since it achieved independence 50 years ago allowing elected councilors the opportunity to operate in an environment whereby their autonomy and authority would be respected, counteracting the centralization policy of the previous regime. He expressed the view of the President for a more federated approach, by strengthening the role of each of the 10 regions, through a commitment to decentralization with regional and local empowerment. The Minister stated Guyana had much to learn from Canada with respect to its municipal, provincial and federal governance structures and stated that the twinning initiative would be a good opportunity to assist Guyana in its governance strengthening both regionally and nationally.

Meeting with the Leader of the Opposition:

The delegation met with the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, who had been President for 12 years until his recent defeat. This is the first time that the People's Progressive Party – Civic (PPP) has been in opposition in 23 years.

The election results gave the A Partnership for National Unity – Alliance for Change (APNU – AFC) Coalition party a one seat majority in Parliament. The PPP did not occupy their seats for two months following the convening of the 11th Parliament after the May 2015 elections. They lost by a mere 1% of votes cast.

The Opposition Leader stated that initially his party had refused to accept the results and is now pushing for electronic voting, which would he believes take the more partisan presiding officers out of the election process, thereby calling for a greater transparency in administering elections.

He stated that Guyana has one of the lowest deforestation levels in the world at 0.06%. Countries such as Norway have purchased carbon credits given Guyana's rich forest abundance.

Meeting with the Minister of Natural Resources:

The Honourable Raphael Trotman, now Minister of Natural Resources, was Speaker of the National Assembly from 2011 until May 2015.

Canada is the largest source of foreign direct investment as well as the largest investor in the extractive industry. There are presently 12 Canadian exploration companies operating in sectors such as gold and oil and gas. Aurora Gold fields launched its operation in December of 2013. The Minister expressed an interest in obtaining Canadian Government support to manage resources in the areas of gold, diamonds and timber production.

Oil exploration has intensified given the significant discovery by American Exxon Mobil. The challenge for Guyana now is the efficient exploitation of such rich resources, while preserving an environmental integrity and allowing for balanced government royalties. He expressed a need for the establishment of a regulatory agency for oil and gas reserves.

It was expressed that Canadian companies working in Guyana are working with local communities to support and develop sustainable extractive sector operations as good corporate citizens, thereby establishing a firm commitment to CSR.

Meeting with the Deputy Secretary-General of the CARICOM Secretariat:

The delegation informed the CARICOM Secretariat of the twinning initiative between provinces and territories of Canada and Commonwealth Caribbean countries, and specifically the present initiative between British Columbia and Guyana. Delegation members also discussed the successful mission to Turks and Caicos where the twinning initiative between the legislatures of TCI and Prince Edward Island was well received. The similarity of Islands as political entities was raised in the context of the Island Studies course offered at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). Moreover, those at CARICOM expressed such enthusiasm for the twinning project stating that it should include all Caribbean countries, not only those who are part of the Commonwealth.

Meeting with the Electoral Commission:

The delegation met with the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission, Dr. Steve Surujbally. The delegation members noted the strong relationship between the Commission and Canada in its assistance in ensuring that elections in Guyana are conducted in a free, fair and credible manner, and referred in particular to the 2015 general election, as well as the upcoming local elections, scheduled for March 18, 2016. These local elections will be held in 71 Local Authority Areas comprising of 6 municipalities or towns and 65 Neighbourhood Democratic Councils. The two primary objectives of these soon to be elected local governments are to enable local democratic decision making while promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural empowerment of these communities.

Meeting with the Deputy Secretary-General of the CARICOM Secretariat:

The meeting held with the Deputy Secretary General of CARICOM, Dr. Manorma Soeknandan, allowed the delegation members the opportunity to explain the purpose of the visit to Turks and Caicos and Guyana as a means to inform these Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth of the Canadian initiative to twin province and territories with their Caribbean counterparts, and to seek the specific endorsement of these Parliaments to participate in the programme. Ms. Mendes was pleased to report that all Parliaments visited were in complete agreement to participate. Moreover, she reported that it is likely that two twinning arrangements would result from the delegation's visit, namely the twinning of Parliaments of the Turks and Caicos with Prince Edward Island as well as the twinning of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia with that of Guyana.

Dr. Soeknandan stated that such programmes are of tremendous importance to Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth and it is important that this connection be enhanced. It was suggested that given the merits of such an initiative, CARICOM would like to see it expanded to all Caribbean Commonwealth countries, noting in particular that Quebec could do much to assist in the democratic and governance development of Haiti.

Visit to the Aurora Gold Mines:

The Aurora Gold Mine achieved first gold production in August 2015, although has been operating in Guyana since 1996. The mine plan for the Aurora Gold Mine is designed to produce 2.86 million ounces of gold, averaging 188,000 ounces per year, over an initial 16 year mine life. It operates in a socially and environmentally responsible way and is committed to proactive and sustainable health, safety, environmental management, and community best practices.

In closing, the delegation would like to thank particularly those from the High Commission whose contributions led to a most successful outcome and in particular, High Commissioner Pierre Giroux, High Commissioner to Guyana and Suriname as well as Commission staff at the Canadian High Commission in Guyana. The delegation would also like to thank representatives from GAC and the Library of Parliament who assisted in the preparation of the necessary briefing materials.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P.

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Turks and Caicos and Guyana
DESTINATION	Providenciales and Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos and Georgetown, Guyana
DATES	February 7 – 14, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Elizabeth Hubley, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Alexandra Mendes, M.P. and Mr. Todd Doherty, M.P.
STAFF	Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$22,527.03
ACCOMMODATION	\$9,536.47
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$2,922.84
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$1,107.67
MISCELLANEOUS	\$1,687.91
TOTAL	\$37,781.92