



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation to the
Bilateral Visit to London, United Kingdom and Valletta, Malta**

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

**London, United Kingdom and Valletta, Malta
March 12– 19, 2016**

Report

A delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) visited London, United Kingdom and Valletta, Malta from March 12 to 19, 2016. Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, led the delegation composed of the Honourable David Smith, Senator, the Honourable Claude Carignan, Senator, and Kelly McCauley, M.P. The delegation was assisted by Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The delegation was assisted by Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary of the Federal Branch. During its visit to London, United Kingdom and Valetta, Malta the delegation members met with their CPA counterparts, legislators, government officials and individuals in the private sector. The CPA constitution encourages visits between member countries with the objective of giving parliamentarians the opportunity to discuss matters of common interest in bilateral relations and issues within the international Commonwealth organization.

Aims and Objectives – Visit to London, United Kingdom:

The objective of the visit to London, United Kingdom was to introduce the Canadian delegation to the UK Parliament, to strengthen the relationship between UK and Canadians parliamentarians, as well as engaging with colleagues from Commonwealth organizations. While in London, the delegation had the opportunity to attend the Commonwealth Service in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh at Westminster Abbey.

The Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST):

POST is the in-house source of independent, balanced and accessible analysis of public policy issues related to science and technology serving both Houses of the UK Parliament. In essence, its mandate is to explain complex scientific issues to Members as well as being a networker between Parliament and the scientific world. The concept was first suggested in the 1980`s, then established in 2001. It is composed of four separate divisions, namely: biological sciences and health, physical sciences and information communications technology; energy and the environment and social sciences. Its Board consists of 10 M.P.'s, 4 Peers and 4 parliamentary officials. The budgeted allocation of 600,000 (pounds) per annum allows for the hosting of seminars, as well as the sponsorship of numerous fellowship opportunities with Research Councils, learned societies and charities, through which PhD students are sponsored to spend three months working at POST. Moreover it provides balanced and accessible overviews of research from across the biological, physical and social sciences, and engineering and technology, always placing the findings of this research in a policy context for Parliamentary use.

Meeting with Diana Johnson, M.P., Shadow Minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

Ms. Johnson discussed the uncertainty amongst the electorate leading up to the Brexit vote on June 23. She stated that should Britain opt to leave the European Union, there would be a need to negotiate existing treaties, and stated that the Prime Minister might well resign. Moreover, with the Scottish National Party (SNP) as a strong force in the political landscape, it could eventually lead to a break-up of the United Kingdom as is known presently. She stated that the Labour Party is very much in favour of remaining in the European Union.

With Nigel Farage leading the Leave campaign, she was of the view that it was important for the Remain campaign to get the arguments out as effectively as possible, given the strong rhetoric from the Leave side. She noted that the Liberal Democrats, like Labour are keen on remaining in the EU, and stated that she thought the results would be very close.

Meeting with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat:

The Chair of the Canadian Branch of the CPA stated that Canada has a long history of accountability, democracy and pluralism. Moreover, the delegation looks forward to engaging with Commonwealth colleagues in support of important mutual objectives, including participation in training activities to promote parliamentary development, democratic governance and enhanced mutual understanding. This can be brought about through the organization of exchanges between parliaments, conferences, workshops, as well as publications and research all designed to foster respect for good parliamentary practice and enhanced consultation among its members.

The Chair went on to state that the Caribbean Twinning Initiative would continue under her leadership, providing a strong framework to share best practices, enhance bilateral relations and promote democratic values. The initiative would allow for those parliaments entering twinning agreements to actively work together on the exchange of information on matters of common interest, participate in training activities to promote parliamentary development, organize exchange visits between Parliaments to create links between Parliamentarians and meet with representatives of the parliaments at conferences and seminars.

The EXCO Chairperson, the Honourable Speaker Dr. Shirin Chaudury, M.P., stated that the CPA is looking to expand its program offerings, by enhancing its spending in this area, while looking to work in a more cost-effective manner through the use of on-line opportunities in which to deliver such programs. It will look to branches to assist in the determination of a more responsive program offering, including peer to peer learning.

Moreover, it was discussed that it would be important to look to have Australia back in the CPA fold, and the Secretary General, Mr. Akbar Khan stated that he would like to make this one of his priorities. Although the Australian states continue to be active members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Federal Branch decided to cease its membership effective January 2012. Reasons included concerns regarding

the financial and administrative stewardship of the Association under the leadership of Dr. William Shija.

Meeting with the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster:

The Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster was appointed to consider the significant work that needs to be done to protect and preserve the heritage of the Palace of Westminster and ensure it can continue to serve as home to the UK Parliament in the 21st century and beyond. Appointed by the House of Commons on 16 July and by the House of Lords on 20 July, the Committee has twelve members (six from each House).

At an early stage in the Committee's deliberations, there was an agreement on certain criteria to guide the inquiry, including:

- to preserve the heritage of the Palace of Westminster as the home of the UK Parliament for future generations;
- to deliver value for money for the taxpayer;
- to continue the effective functioning of Parliament whilst work is happening; and
- to consider the options in the light of the current security climate.

The idea of building a permanent, new parliamentary building elsewhere has been ruled out. The recommendation now is that the building be fully vacated to fulfill all renovations at the same time and the committee is confident that appropriate alternative accommodation can be found within the City of Westminster precinct.

The Committee was interested in the work associated with the restoration of the Canadian Parliament. While much work has been accomplished that respects the architectural integrity of the Parliament Buildings, and especially as noted in the West Block at this time, there has been concern expressed about the rising costs associated with the project, which is scheduled for completion in 2028.

Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC:

Baroness Scotland was pleased to hear of the renewed commitment of Canada towards the Commonwealth following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta in November of 2015. She stated that the Commonwealth is of one of the rare platforms that bring people together of different traditions and she expressed great interest in the work of the CPA Canada Branch in promoting the twinning of parliaments of the Commonwealth Caribbean, including the overseas territories, with provinces and territories.

Baroness Scotland was pleased with the prominent role Canada had played at the CHOGM, and the message that Canada would work hard to uphold the core values of the Commonwealth of respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which is essential for the development and prosperity of its member states. Moreover, in reiterating Canada's commitment to strengthen its engagement, it was expressed that renewed financial support in such areas as climate change and youth opportunities in Africa, would do much to reinforce the stated commitment to reengagement. One

benefit of increased collaboration would provide for a significant opportunity to develop a coordinated plan to provide a consistent and portable means of technical assistance that would serve to enhance a common regulatory framework for use by all 53 countries of the Commonwealth.

Meeting with the Backbench Business Committee:

The Backbench Business Committee was the first business committee of any kind to be established by the House of Commons. It gives an opportunity to backbench Members to bring forward debates of their choice. The Committee meets once a week to consider any subject for debate that a member may put forward, including their case for consideration of such a topic.

The Government decides which days of the week will be given to the Backbench Business Committee for its debates and the amount of time available varies each month.

The Petitions Committee:

The Petitions Committee is set up by the House of Commons to look at e-petitions and public (paper) petitions presented to the House of Commons.

The Committee is made up of 11 backbench members of Parliament from both Government and Opposition parties. The number of seats each party has is calculated to reflect the membership of the House as a whole. The Petitions Committee has the power to schedule a petition or petitions for debate in Westminster Hall on a Monday from 4:30pm, for up to three hours. Most petitions with over 100,000 signatures will be debated – whether in the Committee's time in Westminster Hall or otherwise.

The Committee will refer a petition to a select committee if it is already inquiring into the subject of the petition, or is about to do so, and will consult the relevant select committee (informally or formally) before referring a petition, to find out whether the committee would be likely to take any action as a result of the referral.

Aims and Objectives – Bilateral Visit to Valetta, Malta:

Malta hosted the CHOGM in November 2015, and Canada played an active role at this meeting. The visit in March served as a follow-up to the CHOGM, designed to reinforce Canada's commitment to the Commonwealth at the parliamentary level. In addition, the visit served to enhance the strong people-to-people ties and a shared commitment to democratic values shared by Canada and Malta.

Meeting with the Honourable Justyne Caruana – Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Representative:

As well as being the CWP representative for Malta, the Hon. Justyne Caruana is the Parliamentary Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Active Ageing.

She discussed the issues of concern to her portfolio, stating that in Malta, with a population of 400,000 people, one of four individuals is part of an ageing demographic. She views ageing as both a challenge and an opportunity, stating that 77% of this demographic are women, representing the highest percentage in Europe. Malta is considered a leading country in terms of social reform, with its largest ministry being that of Family and Social Services, followed by education and then health.

Malta is a parliamentary democracy, with a unicameral 69 seat House of Representatives. The two main political parties are the Malta Labour Party with 39 seats and the Nationalist Party with 30 seats in the House.

She stated that she has great respect for the parliamentary component of the Commonwealth, and the importance of parliamentary diplomacy which allows for the testing of ideas without binding the executive.

The upcoming CPC conference was discussed within the context of the upcoming CWP election. The delegation stated that the Honourable Linda Reid, Speaker of the British Columbia Legislature would be seeking the position of International CWP Chairperson and requested the support of Malta regarding her candidacy.

Meeting with the Honourable Censu Galea, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives:

The Deputy Speaker stated that the present House of Representatives was opened on May 4, 2015, and prior to that date, the House met in the Presidential Palace.

He stated that the members are all very locally engaged, given the size of the country. The country is divided into 13 electoral districts, with five members being elected from each district using the single transferable vote electoral system. A Constitutional correctional mechanism allows for the election of additional members in order to establish strict proportionality between the number of seats assigned to each political party represented in Parliament and the number of first count votes obtained by each party in a general election.

The Standing Orders provide for nine Standing Committees as well as special committees for the purpose of investigating specific issues.

The Deputy Speaker stated that the economy of Malta was performing well at 6.2% growth to GDP, and expressed the importance of tourism to its economic success, with an approximate 1.8 million tourists each year.

The issue of immigration was also discussed, with the Deputy Speaker stating that Malta is struggling to reconcile its obligations as a member of the European Union with its geographic proximity to Africa, becoming the gateway, as well as Italy for Africans seeking entry into Europe. There are now over 8,000 immigrants living in Malta, and they are not well integrated into the society, with lower paying jobs and expressed discrimination.

Meeting with Tonio Fenech, CAPAC Executive Committee Chairperson and Hon. David Agius, Chief Opposition Whip:

The Parliament of Malta has taken the lead in the Commonwealth of establishing the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC). It began following the November 2013 CHOGM whereby support was expressed for strengthening PAC's by making them effective, independent and transparent. Largely by means of peer review, the Association would ensure that all Commonwealth Parliaments benefit from strong and independent Public Accounts or equivalent committees to sustain and promote the highest principles in public finance. The CAPAC would also hold a conference every two years with a view to providing a forum for CAPAC members to exchange experiences and challenges in their work and consider any developments in best practice standards in the field. To date there are 25 members in CAPAC, with India in the process of joining. The delegation believed that the twinning initiative launched by the Federal Branch of CPA, Canada would be a most effective means of bringing to the Association a strong membership not only from Canada, but also from the Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth. The delegation endorsed the establishment of the CAPAC and stated that it would look forward to participating in any future meetings and in working to encourage the membership of other Commonwealth legislatures, including the Canadian provinces and territories.

Meeting with the Honourable George Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs:

The Minister began the discussion by expressing his great respect for the parliamentary component of the Commonwealth. Parliamentary diplomacy, he stated, is an extension of the responsibility of the executive as a means of testing ideas without binding the executive. He appreciated Canada's commitment to climate change, stating that it is a significant issue for Malta, given the lack of rainfall Malta had experienced over the past year, leading to crop failure and hardship for farmers. He also stated that Malta is without forests or mountains, leading much exposure in case of more severe weather conditions.

The Minister discussed the outcome of the recent CHOGM Commonwealth Conference as it concerns small states of the Commonwealth, recognizing the need to raise international awareness of their vulnerability. He stated in particular the need to address the debt and financing needs of small states and called for innovation and new partnerships, and for the international community to continue actively to explore innovative measures to alleviate their vulnerabilities and challenges. In this respect the Minister was pleased that CHOGM endorsed the development of a Commonwealth Resilience Framework, and the establishment of the Small States Centre of Excellence in Malta.

In closing, the delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Canadian High Commission in London, United Kingdom as well as the Honourary Consul in Valletta, Malta, Mr. Pier Luca Demajo, for their valuable advice and assistance throughout the visit. The delegation would also like to thank the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Library of Parliament for the provision of briefing material and for briefings prior to departure.

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 London, United Kingdom and Valletta, Malta
DESTINATION	London, United Kingdom and Valletta, Malta
DATES	March 12 – 19, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. David Smith, Senator Hon. Claude Carignan, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P. Mr. Kelly McCauley, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$35,250.13
ACCOMMODATION	\$8,189.09
HOSPITALITY	\$1,065.25
PER DIEMS	\$4,003.08
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$783.30
MISCELLANEOUS	\$272.49
TOTAL	\$49,563.34