



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Annual Gathering of the Open
Parliament Network of ParlAmericas**

Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

**Asunción, Paraguay
May 25 to 28, 2016**

Report

DELEGATION MEMBERS

A delegation from the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas attended the Annual Gathering of the Open Parliament Network of ParlAmericas that was held in Asuncion, Paraguay, from 25 to 28 May 2016. The Canadian Section of ParlAmericas was represented by:

- The Honourable Pana Merchant, Senator

BACKGROUND ON PARLAMERICAS AND THE PARLAMERICAS CANADIAN SECTION

ParlAmericas is an independent network made up of national legislatures that are also members of the Organization of American States (OAS). ParlAmericas members are committed to promoting parliamentary participation in the inter-American system and developing inter-parliamentary dialogue on issues of importance to the hemisphere. ParlAmericas seeks to encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices amongst its members, and works to strengthen the role of legislatures in democratic development and promote harmonization of legislation and hemispheric integration as instruments of sustainable and harmonious development in the region. For more information on the association, please consult www.parl.gc.ca/IIA/.

ROADMAP TOAWRDS LEGISLATIVE OPENESS: TRANSPARANCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ETHICS

A. Objectives of the Event

Since 2012, parliamentarians from the American hemisphere have gathered annually to explore initiatives for enhancing transparency at national legislatures and in political party systems. These meetings lead to the advocacy of broader minimum standards in the relationships between governments and citizens throughout the Americas.

This year's gathering was entitled "Roadmap towards legislative openness: transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics," and featured five moderated sessions: three panel sessions along with two working group sessions.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to provide greater interaction between citizens and their national legislature, promote parliamentary openness and transparency, ensure access to public information, increase accountability and citizen involvement, and put in place high ethical standards in the conduct of parliamentary work.

More concretely, this year's meeting sought to:

- establish a commitment and/or course of action for each pillar of the Open Parliament Network (namely, transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics);
- facilitate dialogue concerning advances made in the region, learning from countries that have implemented initiatives and legislative action plans to increase the openness of their Parliament; and
- strengthen political leadership and promote engagement of parliamentarians in the areas of transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics.

B. Program

The agenda for this year's Gathering included five moderated sessions, in which panellists provided delegates with their views and experiences on how innovation, citizen engagement and legislation can be used to increase the openness of parliaments.

The gathering's inauguration took place on 26 May 2016, in the National Congress of Paraguay. Opening remarks were delivered by Senator Blanca Ovelar, who served as host for the meeting.

The focus of the first session was a discussion about regional experiences and examples of national action plans. It was led by Senator Carlos Filizzola of Paraguay, a representative of the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency. During the second session, the delegates explored the topic of social communication and open data as core factors of transparency within legislative action. The third session focused on creating strategic guidelines for an Open Parliament. The goal of the session was to identify minimum commitments and strategies for addressing each of the four pillars of the Open Parliament Network.

The fourth session took place on 27 May 2016, and the topic of the session was open budgeting (fiscal transparency) in parliament. The purpose of this session was to explore fiscal transparency and provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the importance to legislatures and parliaments of accountability and public openness. Case studies, tools, and best practices to facilitate the open budgeting in national assemblies were discussed. Senator Merchant participated as a panellist for this session.

As part of her presentation, Senator Merchant discussed recent changes approved by the Senate to the disclosure model for senators' expenses. The new disclosure model, put in place by the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, provides greater detail and uniformity in the quarterly disclosure of senators' expenses. The improvements supplement the existing rules governing expenditures by senators that are eligible for reimbursement.

During the fifth and final session, delegates participated in drafting a ParlAmericas framework roadmap on Open Parliaments. This roadmap will serve as a reference document and encourage delegates to develop action plans for their respective national assemblies.

C. Outcomes of the Event

An important outcome of the gathering was the adoption of a road map on legislative openness that can, in the future, serve as a guide for parliamentarians in the development of legislative agreements and parliamentary action plans. This roadmap also sets out as a series of commitments made by participants to be implemented in the future by participating national legislatures.

The process to create this road map began in March 2016, when a draft was developed at a working meeting held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between parliamentarians of ParlAmericas and the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency. This draft was amended using a consultation process that allowed feedback to be provided by civil society organizations located across Canada, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Respectfully submitted,

The Hon. Robert D. Nault, Q.C., M.P.
Chair,
Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	Annual Gathering of the Open Parliamen Network of ParlAmericas
DESTINATION	Asunción, Paraguay
DATES	25–28 May, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pana Merchant, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 5,875.69
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,517.66
HOSPITALITY	\$ 00.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 268.10
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 00.00
MISCELLANEOUS/ REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 00.00
TOTAL	\$ 7,661.45