



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the ParlAmericas
Interparliamentary Meeting
on Partnerships to Transform Gender Relations**

Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

**Kingston, Jamaica
January 24 and 25, 2018**

REPORT

Introduction

A delegation of four Canadian parliamentarians attended the ParlAmericas Interparliamentary Meeting on Gender Equality on 24 and 25 January 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica. The delegation was led by Ms. Joyce Murray, M.P. She was accompanied by the Hon. Anne Cools, Senator; Mr. Murray Rankin, M.P.; and the Hon. David Wells, Senator.

ParlAmericas is one of the only organizations that brings together parliamentarians from all 35 countries of the Americas. From the time when ParlAmericas was established in 2001, the Latin American and Caribbean region has evolved from a region of emerging markets to one characterized by thriving modern democracies. Many of the countries in the region share the same values and outlooks as Canada, and make excellent like-minded partners.

ParlAmericas' work focuses on gender equality, the environment and promoting open and accountable parliaments. The purpose of the meeting in Jamaica was to build partnerships to transform gender relations and examine how parliamentarians can contribute to eliminating gender inequality.

Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in eliminating gender biases when legislating, representing their constituents, and scrutinizing the government's spending plans. They can also contribute significantly to the inclusion of public participation and feedback among stakeholders.

Briefing with Officials of the High Commission of Canada to Jamaica

On 23 January 2018, the Canadian delegation met with Canadian High Commissioner Laurie Peters and officials working in the High Commission of Canada to Jamaica, to receive a briefing on political, trade, humanitarian aid and security matters in Jamaica.

The delegation heard that Jamaica and Canada have a close and long-standing relationship, one based on 55 years of official diplomatic relations. In fact, trade of salt fish and rum between the countries dates back centuries.

Officials provided the delegation with an update on the state of emergency that had recently been declared in St. James Parish due to gang violence. Officials also discussed the impact of crime on the local economy.

Two-way trade between Jamaica and Canada is balanced, and amounts to about \$1 billion annually. The delegation heard that the priority sectors for Jamaica's economy are information and communication technology, infrastructure (e.g., roads and highways remain susceptible to being washed out) and preparation for the impacts of climate change. In terms of energy production, Jamaica is interested in diversifying into renewable sectors. Jamaica is working to raise its environmental standards, especially as they relate to water treatment.

Officials noted that Jamaica was invited by Argentina, the chair of the G20 in 2018, to take part in G20 meetings in 2018 as the representative for the Caribbean.

The delegation also heard that Jamaica has made many important advances in terms of gender equality. Indeed, women tend to outnumber men in a number of professional fields, including as corporate leaders, in academia, on the high court and in the foreign service. As well, Jamaica has recently put in place a national violence against women action plan. However, it was noted that women's representation in the legislature remains low and that the island still has only one shelter for victims of domestic violence.

Other topics discussed at the meeting included the active post-secondary student exchange programs between Jamaica and Canada; the strong influence churches in the Caribbean have with respect to social policy; issues related to the administration of justice; and the success and importance of the seasonal agricultural workers program, which allows Canadian employers to hire temporary foreign workers and which may be expanded to include women's participation.

Opening Ceremony of the Interparliamentary Meeting

Dr. Sapphire Longmore, Senator from Jamaica and member of the ParlAmericas board of directors, opened the meeting by welcoming delegates and providing an overview of the work undertaken by ParlAmericas in the hemisphere. In her remarks, she emphasized that the gender equality network provides a diverse and inclusive forum where parliamentarians, civil society experts and a variety of stakeholders can share ideas and work together to make progress on promoting gender equality. She also encouraged delegates to avail themselves of ParlAmericas' Strategic Planning Tool for Initiating a Multi-Party Caucus for Gender Equality. This questionnaire, which was launched in Ottawa in 2016, can be used by parliaments when designing and planning a multi-party gender caucus.

Mr. Denzil Thorpe, M.P. from Jamaica and the Permanent Secretary of the Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, spoke about the pervasive unconscious bias toward women and their role in society. He called on men to promote gender equality, citing research showing that improving women's economic condition leads to improved economic fortunes for the entire country. In addition, companies that foster gender equality experience greater productivity and higher job satisfaction. Mr. Thorpe also noted that Jamaican women remain underrepresented in their Parliament, and that increased education, awareness and resources need to be allocated toward improving this situation.

The keynote address was given by Ms. Sheila Roseau, the Deputy Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF). She began by noting the recent mainstream movement of women shining a light on the inappropriate behaviour they have experienced on the part of powerful men. This had led to a public debate about the normalcy of harassment and how harassment had for too long been, if not tolerated, then ignored. Ms. Roseau was careful to note that men can also experience harassment from women or men, but are disinclined to report it.

Ms. Roseau pointed out that recent research has estimated that if things proceed at the current rate, it will take about 150 years for women to achieve equal pay as men for equal work. Further, this calculation of work by women does not take into account

unpaid labour and caregiving responsibilities that are usually undertaken by women. Ms. Roseau was of the view that lawmakers have an important role to play in developing and implementing policies that would lead to gender equality. However, she noted that women's representation in the legislatures of the hemisphere is generally below 30%, with no legislature having over 50% representation by women.

Ms. Roseau concluded by providing delegates with a broad description of her role at the UNPF, including its focus on women's health, improving gender relations and providing assistance to women adversely affected by natural disasters in the Caribbean.

Session 1 – Comprehensive approaches to address gender inequality

The objective of the first session was to explore gender equality frameworks in place in the Caribbean and in Canada that allow for collaboration between different civil society groups and parliaments. This session was led Ms. Patricia Mohammed, Professor at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies.

Ms. Mohammed began by discussing the term gender. She noted that, in her view, gender is a network of power relations, both ideological and material, which reinforced each other. She also noted that the term gender is understood differently by different segments of the population. Ms. Mohammed then addressed several different issues related to gender: she gave examples of first- and second-generation legislation that dealt with sexual harassment; she noted that the success of gender equality initiatives in the Caribbean has had an unintended negative consequence of potentially turning some young men toward criminality and scholastic underachievement; and she provided information on the United Nations Development Programme's gender measure index, which found that increases in the equality of leadership positions held by men and women are linked to the development of the entire country.

Ms. Mohammed provided delegates with points that are, in her view, important for parliaments to consider when seeking to adopt gender equality legislation. These are:

- political will is required to advance and adopt legislation;
- it is important for supporters of gender equality legislation to rally support for such initiatives in parliament;
- that wide consultation with stakeholders and civil society by legislatures can lead to credibility in the legislative output; and
- it is important to establish and respect timelines for implementing gender equality measures.

She further noted that gender equality legislation must be research-driven; lobby groups can be leveraged to pressure reluctant parliamentarians; and that legislatures ought to consider including a review mechanism for gender equality legislation.

During the question and answer portion of the session, Ms. Murray told delegates about the gender based analysis plus (GBA+) initiatives taken by Canada's Parliament, in particular the GBA+ analyses that are being done for parliamentary committees and for the policy proposals brought before the federal Cabinet for its consideration. She also noted that following a motion proposed by the New Democratic Party, the House of

Commons struck a special committee to examine the current pay equity regime in Canada and make recommendations to the House.

Other matters raised during the question and answer portion included the importance of allocating resources to gender equality initiatives; how the lack of political commitment can be obfuscated by a lack of funding for gender equality initiatives; the potential societal cost of systematically neglecting women; the advances made in Jamaica in terms of gender equality initiatives; and the role of joint select committees in advancing gender equality in legislatures. On the latter, Senator Cools provided delegates with an example of her experience as a member of a 1998 special joint Senate–House of Commons committee on child custody and access in Canada.

Session 2 – Effective strategies for engaging men

The second session featured a discussion on how gender equality initiatives could successfully engage men as active partners in transforming thinking on gender and masculinity. The discussion was led by Mr. Humberto Carolo, Executive Director of White Ribbon, and Mr. Patrick Prendergast, Acting Director at the University of Western Indies.

Mr. Carolo described the White Ribbon as an organization that promotes healthy masculinity, and teaches men to never condone the mistreatment of women by remaining silent. White Ribbon was established by a group of university and college professors in the wake of the 1989 mass shooting that targeted women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal.

Mr. Carolo told delegates that violence against women was disproportionately carried out by men. Consequently, it is important to involve men when creating and carrying out initiatives that promote women's rights. He described the resources that White Ribbon employs in its information and outreach campaigns. For example, men can better promote gender equality by listening to others, especially women, educating themselves on gender equality issues, promoting awareness and supporting gender equality efforts. Mr. Carolo also provided examples of programs and campaigns organized by White Ribbon in Toronto, including partnerships with professional sports teams.

Mr. Prendergast's wide-ranging presentation covered a number of topics. He told delegates that, in his view, men occupy a place at the top of the societal power structure while women currently remain in the middle; that gender is not a synonym for women; that access to education ought to be based on ability, not gender or income; that there are issues with paternity sharing in Jamaica in respect of fathers being denied custody of children, as Jamaican courts tended to be biased against men raising children; and that men's behaviour is not consistent with good health.

Mr. Prendergast also told delegates that, in his view, young men in Jamaica are increasingly being drawn into gangs, violence and crime. He said that the gun has become a symbol of power for them, and that they no longer considered education to be a priority. He also discussed gender equality programs for men that he has organized and noted some of the successes and difficulties that he has experienced. He concluded his remarks by stating that respect and love were the core values of humanity.

The question and answer portion of the session covered many topics. Among them, delegates discussed the concept of male privilege; socio-normative behaviour in the Caribbean; the adequacy of the school curriculum in the Jamaica; and women's advances in the Caribbean versus the region's intransigent socio-economic culture. The discussion concluded with the recognition of the need to continue to engage in respectful dialogue, support each other and accept that societal change can be slow and small in scale.

Session 3 – Media and cultural agents

Session three featured two Jamaican civil society organizations that have used innovative ways to raise awareness about the root causes of gender inequality and to call for action legal reforms. The two presenters were Ms. Lana Finikin, Executive Director, Sistren Theatre Collective and Ms. Patricia Phillips, Executive Director, WMW Jamaica (formerly Women's Media Watch), and the moderator was Ms. Elaine Wint.

Ms. Finikin provided delegates with background information about Sistren and gave an overview of recent projects they have undertaken. Established in 1977, Sistren uses the performing arts to influence and provide social commentary on matters of local importance. Their approach is to put on performances in which local community members are the performers and the creators of the play's script. The stages for Sistren's performances range from street corners to large halls. Their projects reach out to communities affected by poverty and gang violence, and can be viewed on as videos on the internet.

Ms. Phillips told delegates that WMW was founded in 1987 with several related goals in mind: to promote a peaceful and caring society, reduce gender-related violence, shape positive thinking and increase women's role in decision-making. WMW has on numerous occasions lobbied and worked with Jamaican governmental departments in order to improve the legal regime in Jamaica with respect to certain social issues. For example, WMW lobbied for sexual harassment legislation; the implementation of standards on references to violence in song lyrics; a code for children's programming; and a review of Jamaica's *Sexual Offences Act*.

During the question and answer period, Ms. Murray congratulated both presenters for the power and bravery of their work and for providing children with an outlet to build their confidence. Ms. Murray noted that, in her view, children needed to gain a sense of confidence that they can contribute to society; otherwise they could be at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Session 4 – Advancing legislative reforms for workplace equality: Critical moments for change

Session four dealt with legal responses to sexual abuse and harassment in the workplace in place in various countries, in the context of the current heightened interest in ending such inappropriate workplace behaviour. Four presenters provided delegates with information about legislative reforms for workplace equality: Ms. Rose-Marie Antoine, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies (UWI); Ms. Sharon Coburn Robinson, Acting Senior Director of the Bureau of Gender Affairs; Ms.

Joyce Murray, M.P. for Vancouver Quadra and Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board; and Ms. Velma Newton, Regional Project Director for the IMPACT Justice Project and a former parliamentarian.

Ms. Antoine provided a broad overview of the legal framework of sexual harassment in the Caribbean region. She noted that numerous legal recourses for harassment are available to a complainant, including unfair dismissal legislation, anti-discrimination law and employment law. She cautioned that sexual harassment is not rape and assault, as these are separate offences under criminal law. She gave her view on some of the components of sexual harassment, such as the offending conduct must be unwelcome, the target of the conduct must feel offended, the conduct could create a hostile work environment, and that a reasonable person would acknowledge that a respondent's conduct was offensive and unwelcome. Ms. Antoine noted that, generally, sexual harassment can be viewed as a symptom of a deeper societal problem, namely unequal power between genders.

Ms. Murray opened her presentation by sharing with delegates that her mother and her grandmother had played a part in pushing for gender equality and removing gender barriers. Ms. Murray noted that significant progress towards gender equality had been made in recent times in Canada. She provided delegates with brief summaries on the following matters:

- Canada has a gender-balanced federal cabinet;
- historic apologies have been made by Canada's prime minister to vulnerable communities that have been systematically disadvantaged or have suffered unjust discrimination and reprisals, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirited (LGBTQ2) public servants and Indigenous people;
- a national inquiry has been launched into missing and murdered indigenous women and its work is ongoing;
- a gender based analysis plus (GBA+) lens has been applied by the government to recent national budgets;
- in 2016, the government introduced legislation meant to increase diversity of representation on corporate boards in Canada;
- in 2017, the government introduced legislation to strengthen the laws and policies that address violence and harassment in workplaces under federal jurisdiction; and
- the government would introduce pay equity legislation for workers in federally regulated work places in the near future.

Ms. Robinson provided delegates with a detailed account of a draft national sexual harassment policy to be introduced in the Parliament of Jamaica. The harassment policy contained a definition of harassment along with specified behaviour that would not be considered harassment (interactions between consenting adults; mutual attraction; consensual relationships; and expressions of friendship between friends). The draft policy also contained:

- an informal resolution process;

- a formal process that involved an independent investigation into alleged unwanted behaviour;
- protections against reprisals for complainants;
- sanctions for false or vexatious allegations;
- confidentiality provisions; and
- an education and prevention component.

Similarly, Ms. Newton participated in a project funded by the Government of Canada to create a new model anti-harassment law for Barbados. The project was spearheaded by IMPACT, a regional justice reform project that also received assistance from the United Nations.

During the question and answer portion of the session, Ms. Murray provided information on the incorporation of GBA+ analysis to Treasury Board submissions (submissions seeking authority to implement a new program) and memoranda to Cabinet. She noted that GBA+ was required to be conducted early on and throughout both processes. Other topics covered during the discussion included the burden of harassment that female politicians may endure, especially on social media; the use of non-disclosure agreements in the settlement of harassment cases; male backlash to changing social norms; the reprisals faced by whistleblowers; the merits of having a civil versus criminal burden of proof for cases of alleged harassment; the difficulties of the compliance and enforcement of harassment legislation; and the importance of education, awareness and acceptance in changing societal norms.

Session 5 – Mobilizing partnerships: Building a gender equality campaign

During the final session of the interparliamentary gathering, delegates were assigned the task of creating an International Women’s Day campaign, taking into account various approaches to transforming gender norms. Participants rotated through six different tables over the course of five rounds of brainstorming. The results were as follows:

Table 1: At this table, participants identified harmful gender norms and barriers to women’s advancement in politics; noted the need to put in place anti-harassment policies in legislatures; noted that traditional barriers to women’s full societal participation still exist; found that men continue to receive higher pay than women for equal work; and said that an imbalance of rights exists between men and women.

Table 2: At this table, participants stated that strategic partnerships were needed to advance gender relationships. They wanted to see transformed gender relations among all societal groups at all levels (e.g., sports, armed forces, education sector; religious organizations, etc.). Societal changes need to include urban centres and rural areas, and create regional and global partners.

Table 3: At this table, participants discussed how their campaign could engage and partner with parliaments and parliamentarians. They proposed encouraging everyone to take GBA+ training; holding townhall meetings on gender; holding youth forums; engaging in social media campaigns; mandating a joint select committee to undertake a

study on gender relations; and holding public rallies. It was noted that the issue of gender equality is not a partisan issue.

Table 4: At this table, participants considered the best ways to publicize their campaign. They noted that their campaign's message had to be well designed and positive; that use of social media was critical; that they needed to reach young people; and that television and radio media could be approached for involvement. They also listed all of the places that campaigners would visit in order to spread the word about their campaign, including work places, sporting events, public spaces and community centres. Lastly, they stated that there needed to be mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of their campaign.

Table 5: At this table, participants discussed how their campaign could be made sustainable over time. In their view, they would require a permanent secretariat that would research women's issues in the country and region. The outreach of the secretariat would involve all relevant stakeholders, would use social media and would be both local and global.

Table 6: At this table, participants discussed how to recruit members to their campaign. They noted that community outreach was important and that they would collect data on gender-related matters. They also noted that much overlap existed between their presentation and those of the previous five tables.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Robert Nault, P.C., M.P.

Chair

Canadian Section of ParIAmericas

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	ParlAmericas Interparliamentary Meeting on Partnerships to Transform Gender Relations
DESTINATION	Kingston, Jamaica
DATES	January 24 and 25, 2018
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Honorable Anne Cools, Senator Honorable David Wells, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Joyce Murray, M.P. Mr. Murray Rankin, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Jacques Maziade, Association Secretary Mr. Andre Barnes, Association Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$10,762.79
ACCOMMODATION	\$5,066.12
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$1,747.55
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$17,576.46