

# The Canadian Scene

## 53<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Regional Conference

More than 100 delegates were welcomed to Victoria by host jurisdiction British Columbia for the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Canadian Regional Conference from July 19-25, 2015. The conference theme focused on parliamentary security.

## CWP Meeting

Speaker of the BC Legislative Assembly and CWP Chair **Linda Reid** brought the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) steering committee meeting to order on the afternoon of July 19 following introductions and a reading by author **M.A.C. Farrant**. The committee discussed the CWP Canadian Chapter's various projects, including a new promotional video, and how to use special funding from CPA Headquarters to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding of the CWP. **Meenakshi Dhar**, Director of Programs for the

CPA Secretariat, and Saskatchewan Senator **Raynell Andreychuk** spoke at a session titled "Is There a Role for CWP in Election Monitoring?" chaired by Speaker Reid. The presenters noted that in addition to bringing their parliamentary knowledge to these monitoring projects, they could play a role in fostering women's greater involvement in civil society.

On July 20, the main day of CWP meetings opened with a blessing by **Mary Anne Thomas** of the Esquimalt First Nation and reading by **Zoé Duhaime**, Victoria's Youth Poet Laureate. Following the Chair's business report, attendees listened to a thoroughly engrossing presentation by social justice advocate **Jody Paterson** titled "The Journey of a Thousand Steps: Walking with Vulnerable Women on the Road to Change," chaired by BC MLA **Jackie Tegart**. Paterson asked the women parliamentarians present to keep in mind the most vulnerable Canadians when legislating social policies. In a session chaired by Quebec MNA **Caroline Simard**, UBC PhD candidate

Photos courtesy of the Legislative Assembly of BC



Members of the CWP Steering Committee: Standing (from left) - MPP Lisa Thompson, Senator Raynell Andreychuk, MLA Linda Reid, MLA Wendy Bisaro, MHA Lisa Dempster. Seated (from left) - MLA Patricia Angnakak, MLA Jennifer Howard, MLA Laura Ross, MNA Caroline Simard, MLA Lisa Harris, MLA Jackie Tegart.



BC Speaker Linda Reid welcomes delegates to Confederation Garden Park during the opening ceremonies to the 53rd Canadian Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Grace Lore outlined research she has conducted with women parliamentarians internationally about their experiences navigating issues relating to gender in politics. Session chair **Wendy Bisaro**, a NWT MLA, introduced presenter **Janni Aragon**, a professor in the University of Victoria's Political Science Department to discuss security issues involving women, and especially women parliamentarians, using social media. In a fourth session, Chair **Laura Ross**, an MLA from Saskatchewan, introduced **Isabel Metcalfe**, a public affairs counsel, to discuss opportunities and experiences monitoring elections abroad. Panelists included Senator **Andreychuk**, and **Debbie Nider**

and **Linda Rubuliak** of CANADEM. A final session chaired by Speaker Reid featured BC Senator **Mobina Jaffer** who offered comments about women in conflict zones and how women's groups can help to combat radicalism within their communities and families.

### Canadian Regional Meeting

On July 21 delegates and observers gathered for an opening ceremony at Confederation Garden Park featuring Elder **Elmer George** of the Songhees First Nation which included a presentation of the talking stick and a performance by a group of First Nation Unity drummers. Sessions included a presentation on accessibility within Canadian Parliaments by Nova Scotia Speaker **Kevin Murphy** chaired by Prince Edward Island Senator **Elizabeth Hubley**; a discussion on security considerations at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia with BC Deputy Speaker **Douglas Horne** and Sergeant-at-Arms **Gary Lenz** chaired by Saskatchewan Speaker **Dan D'Autremont**; Ms. Aragon appeared for a second time at the conference to speak about parliamentarians using social media more generally in a session chaired by Manitoba Speaker **Daryl Reid**. The day concluded with a session chaired by NWT Speaker **Jackie Jacobson** in which *Vancouver Sun* editorial cartoonist **Graham Harrop** discussed how he finds his inspiration.



Newfoundland and Labrador MHA **Lisa Dempster**, Northwest Territories MLA **Wendy Bisaro** and NWT Principal Clerk for Corporate and Interparliamentary Affairs **Gail Bennett** at the CWP meeting.

Morning sessions on July 22 included a panel discussion on ethics and accountability of members

chaired by Newfoundland and Labrador Speaker **Wade Verge** featuring **Sandra Barnes**, Clerk of the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislative Assembly and Senator Andreychuk. Ms. Barnes and Senator Andreychuk discussed how each of their respective jurisdictions has dealt with or is dealing with scandals involving members' expenses. In a session chaired by Ontario Speaker **Dave Levac**, **Jacques Chagnon**, President of the Quebec National Assembly, spoke about the principles and application of security standard for parliament buildings using an improvement project in Quebec as an example. The final session of the day, chaired by Alberta Speaker **Robert Wanner**, saw MPs **Joyce Murray**, **Malcolm Allen** and **Chris Charlton** offer their personal reflections on the incident on Parliament Hill on October 22, 2014 when a gunman entered the Hall of Honour. The MPs noted that social media was both informative during the event, but also potentially exposed Members to risk by identifying their locations or spreading false or unconfirmed information. They also spoke of the effects of post-traumatic stress on parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and officers who were near the incident. The day's sessions concluded with the annual regional council meeting.

On July 23, delegates were given the opportunity to board the *HMCS Vancouver* at CFB Esquimalt for a guided tour that included demonstrations and maneuvers in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Attendees expressed great admiration for the work of the men and women on duty who were exceptional hosts.

On July 24, the conference concluded with two sessions which featured speakers from Australian state parliaments who were among more than a dozen guest delegates from the country. **Michael Sutherland**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia delivered a presentation on security and access in Australian parliaments in a session chaired by PEI Speaker **Buck Watts**. Speaker Sutherland screened a dramatic and realistic video which depicted a fictional terrorist attack on his legislative assembly and how security handled the situation. A second session, chaired by Yukon Speaker **David Laxton**, found Speaker D'Autremont and **Barry House**, President of the Legislative Council of Australia, discussing the twinning arrangements made between Saskatchewan and Western Australia that have included parliamentary exchanges. Additional twinning plans were discussed between delegates from other jurisdictions.

Photos courtesy of the Legislative Assembly of BC



Delegates, guests and accompanying persons at the 53rd Canadian Regional Conference in Victoria, British Columbia at the Confederation Garden Park.

## Regional Executive Committee, CPA\*

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Linda Reid, British Columbia

### **FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT**

Wade Verge, Newfoundland and Labrador

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Joe Preston, Federal Branch

### **PAST PRESIDENT**

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### **CHAIR OF THE CWP, CANADIAN SECTION**

(Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians)

Linda Reid, British Columbia

### **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER**

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## Members of the Regional Council\*

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Charles Robert, Clerk

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Dan D'Autremont, Speaker

Gregory Putz, Secretary

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Sandra Barnes, Secretary

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Tim Mercer, Secretary

### **NUNAVUT**

George Qulaut, Speaker

John Quirke, Secretary

### **YUKON**

David Laxton, Speaker

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\*As of September 30, 2015

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