

The Canadian Scene

New Ontario Speaker

On July 11, 2018, Ontario MPPs elected Progressive Conservative MPP **Ted Arnott** as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Elected on the first ballot, Arnott sought the role alongside Progressive Conservative MPPs **Randy Hillier**, **Jane McKenna** and **Rick Nicholls**.

The MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills was first elected to the Assembly in 1990 and has served continuously since. A former Deputy Speaker, Arnott has been on the Assembly's Presiding Officers team for 13 of the past 15 years.

In remarks to MPPs prior to the vote, Arnott noted he had past experience in the Chair and had sat in the House as a government member, an opposition member, and a third-party member. "I have 'seen it from all sides,'" he said. "I have sought to be fair and impartial and demonstrate appropriate respect for all members while seeking to maintain decorum in the chamber."

Replacing outgoing Speaker **Dave Levac**, who did not run for re-election in the recent general election, Arnott told his colleagues he looks forward to serving the House just as he has served his constituents. "I'm well aware of the challenges and the responsibility that's entailed by being the Speaker and I truly want to be fair and impartial as I discharge the duties of this office," he said.

A graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, prior to his own election Arnott served as executive assistant to former Waterloo MPP Jack Johnson from 1987-1990.

CPA Canadian Regional Meeting

From July 22-27, 2018, parliamentarians from across the country gathered in Ottawa for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's 56th Canadian Regional Conference.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Meeting

On July 22, the CWP Canada steering committee met to participate in a half-day strategic action workshop.



Hon. Ted Arnott

Guided by strategic planning facilitator **Vicki Lass**, CWP chair **Laura Ross** said the workshop was necessary to help the organization focus on turning its discussions into action. The goal was to build a list of action items so that each delegate could work on one to help the CWP fulfill its mission to "assist Canadian women and girls to discover their political potential experience the fulfillment of a career in public service and create a better society."

Among the participants, goals included: creating a digital campaign school to help women in rural or remote communities, changing media portrayals of women leaders, focussing on economic barriers that discourage or prevent women from participating in politics, and preventing partisanship from diluting what CWP wants to achieve.

Although CWP envisions women as equal partners in the Canadian Parliament and provincial and territorial legislatures, participants noted that 'equal



CWP Canada Chair Laura Ross and CPA Executive Committee Chair Emilia Monjowa Lifaka officially launch CWP Canada's new web site as CWP Canada secretary Remi Bourgault looks on.

partners' does not just mean 'equal numbers.' There has to be respect, engagement, and meaningful collaboration.

Ms. Lass talked about the concept of a tipping point when creating a movement – the point where there's a critical mass and the movement doesn't take as much effort to sustain itself. She advocated mentoring one woman to help expand the movement. Saskatchewan MLA **Nadine Wilson** noted it's also important to mentor boys to help them become good men who support women.

Ms. Lass explained that in transforming words into action it is important to share success stories in your constituency, participate in networking activities, and broaden outreach efforts. She led participants in a goal choosing activity which looked at ease of implementation and impact. In order to get some 'quick wins' to build a movement, immediate goals should be ones with high impact and high ease.

She concluded by suggesting the CWP "create a repository" to share stories and wins with all women, while being careful about over-emphasizing 'war stories' regarding things like social media trolls or discrimination that can discourage people. Ms. Lass highlighted that when using social media to share success stories, visual media (such as Instagram) are especially effective. "People remember 80 per cent of what they see, 20 per cent of what they read, and only about 10 per cent of what they hear," she said,

adding that visual posts produce 650 per cent higher engagement than text only posts.

A business meeting in the afternoon included a report on a Regional Outreach program in Yukon by MLA **Geraldine Van Bibber**, a presentation on the new CWP Canada web site, and reports on the chair's visit to CPA International events.

On July 23, following opening remarks by the Chair, the CWP business session began. Ms. Ross, CPA Executive Committee Chair **Emilia Monjowa Lifaka** and CWP Canada secretary **Remi Bourgault** officially launched the group's new web site. Other notable business included:

- Northwest Territories MLA **Julie Green** volunteering to head up CWP Canada's social media accounts
- A review of how CWP Canada used strengthening funding from 2017-2018 to create banners for all provinces and territories to bring to events and the new website
- Reports from Ms. Ross and Ontario MP **Yasmin Ratansi** on news coming out of international meetings they attended on behalf of CWP Canada

In the day's first session, Ms. Lifaka spoke of her mandate as CPA Chair to increase the number of women parliamentarians in the Commonwealth. In order to promote women's leadership, she said it is imperative to continue using successful strategies (leadership training programs, promoting women's economic empowerment, implementing or expanding a successful quota system, education) and encouraging new innovative strategies. She also mentioned plans to create a CPA and CWP Awareness Week in March each year. In a Q&A session following her presentation, Ms. Lifaka was asked about best practices to encourage women's participation in parliamentary politics. She explained that while there are plenty of promises for new conventions and supports, instruments of implementation are lacking. She also contended that a quota system is important when women do not have the same resources as men (seats reserved for only women to compete).

In a second session, Red Deer Mayor **Tara Veer** spoke of how #MeToo and social media are affecting municipal politics. Ms. Veer recounted Sheldon Kennedy's story of abuse because it had become Red Deer's community story and greatly influenced how the city has responded to #MeToo. She suggested that social media offers opportunities and challenges



CWP Canada delegates to the 2018 conference in Ottawa.

simultaneously. She was not an early adopter, but she has increasingly used it to deliver information as mayor in a timely way. Greater accessibility of officials means there is greater accountability. However, it also removes the formality of government. Ms. Veer explained that some people think a tweet is a formal request. She also noted how sometimes it can give credibility to what would otherwise be coffee shop gossip.

Part of the challenge of #MeToo for legislators is that it can undermine rule of law (the burden of proof). It is also nearly impossible to both take all accusations seriously while still providing due process. Red Deer's community response has been built around several principles: supporting individuals who disclose; establishing a culture of respect; adopting (and enforcing) a code of conduct; establishing whistleblower legislation and/or ethical protective mechanisms; and empowering the bystander. This final principle is attributed to Sheldon Kennedy's story and requires a cultural response (everyone suspected the abuse, but no one said anything that could have stopped it.)

During a Q&A session, Ms. Veer outlined how she handles abuse on social media by explaining the use of a tiered response. If there are egregiously offensive posts by a user, she blocks them – especially if there's a pattern. For lesser offenses, she will respond, note her objections to the language or tone used and say

she will not comment on the post or thread further. Instead she encourages the user to contact her office formally if they want to discuss it further. Usually other thread readers will support her. In a third tier of posts, she will respond to misinformation (particularly in cases of public safety) even if it's disrespectful.

During a third session on "Evolution of Ethics in Parliament," Senator **Raynell Andreychuk** noted that parliamentary privilege is an important concept to understand when examining ethics within parliament. Parliamentary privilege in Canada dates from 1867, but ethics and conflicts of interest were not talked about much then. Respectability was assumed by genteel gentlemen: "My word is my honour."

Senator Andreychuk suggested that context (time and culture) is important in defining conflict of interest and ethics. It depends on the people you're serving and their value judgments/expectations. These must be constantly reviewed, she added. Should parliamentarians be held to a higher standard? The senator contended that debate is ongoing and unfinished. She says many parliamentarians are in awe and humble when first elected, but over time they can lose the ability for self-criticism that's needed to evaluate their actions.

Turning to the Senate's Conflict of Interest Code, created in the early 2000s, Senator Andreychuk

explained that much of the code focussed on money and influence, but there was little emphasis on harassment and in terms of ethics there was some weakness.

In a fourth session, on advocacy after #MeToo, presenter **Mari Murariu** offered an interesting perspective of how the #MeToo movement is presenting some challenges for the women involved in advocacy and lobbying activities with parliamentarians.

A lot of the work they do is based on relationships, but elected officials have started to take some steps to insulate themselves. Referring to the “Mike Pence example,” (the U.S. vice-president has said he will not have dinner with women, other than his wife, to prevent a situation where a harassment charge could be made), Ms. Murariu said both federally and provincially, she has learned there has been a re-emergence in Canada of unwritten rules about male parliamentarians who only meet with doors open and who will not socialize or meet at receptions due to fear of accusations. This makes the jobs of women lobbyists that much more difficult when they need to discuss things off-the-record or sensitive topics, she explained. A strong, knee-jerk reaction is not the best way to address this issue, she offered.

Lobbyists aren’t allowed to put politicians in a position of conflict of interest, but the reverse is not true. If an untoward move is made on a lobbyist, the only option is the courts – and according to Ms. Murariu, that would be career suicide. Young women lobbyists have addressed concerns about inappropriate behaviour from male politicians to her in the past. Because there is really no place to formally address this outside of the courts, her advice has been for them to talk to their employers, explain what they need, and provide some options for how to move forward. She also told attendees about the European Union system where you must pro-actively register as a lobbyist. The EU then allows them to book meeting rooms and this, in turn, provides more legitimacy to the position.

A final session on #MeToo and the Media, featured **Adrienne Batra**, editor-in-chief of the *Toronto Sun*. Ms. Batra asked ‘how do you balance due process with swift condemnation?’ She said Canada has had several brushes with this, but the **Patrick Brown** case was a particularly instructive example of what not to do. She says as a journalist, she would rather be right than first and noted that she couldn’t have gone to print with the allegations against Brown based on the work

and sources the journalists had gathered. Ms. Batra referenced a current story on allegations made against the prime minister from years ago. She explained that it is the news media’s responsibility to hold him to account, while still being careful not to report details or rumours without corroboration. She stated that media must be introspective – what is the public good versus potentially destroying someone publicly? Ms. Batra also drew distinctions between traditional news media that have codes of ethics and rules for reporting and social media and new media sources without procedures to protect against false reports or giving public persons the ability to respond to reports.

CPA Canadian Regional Conference

The main conference opened on July 24 with welcoming remarks by Senate Speaker **George Furey** and CPA Canadian Regional Chair **Yasmin Ratansi**. Speaker Furey noted the conference would tackle topics that dealt with disrespect of rule of law, manipulation of social media, and cyber attacks. With democracy under threat by these actions, he said we must be vigilant. Ms. Ratansi added that these conferences allow parliamentarians to discuss how to exchange best practices so that the Westminster style of parliamentary government survives.

Prior to the first sessions, CPA Chairperson **Emilia Lifaka** provided an overview of the road ahead for the organization. Ms. Lifaka is the first CPA chair to have visited a Canadian regional conference, and attendees expressed gratitude for her appearance at sessions throughout the week-long event.

Ms. Lifaka thanked the Canadian Branch for their collaboration and commitment to her work at CPA HQ. She said her work with various branches of the CPA reminds her of an old African adage: if you want to go fast, walk alone, but if you want to go far, walk with others. She reported on plans to reconstitute the CPA from charity status to a new organization, noted that CPA master classes and digital education initiatives will continue, and announced her intentions to launch new programs to support changing times.

Session 1: Parliament and the #MeToo Movement

Samara Canada’s **Jane Hilderman** explained that the issue of harassment has been creeping into her organization’s lens and used her time to summarize some recent research. With women disproportionately affected by harassment, Samara’s exit interviews revealed many former women MPs, especially



CPA Canadian Regional Conference attendees participated in seven sessions discussing matters relating to work-life balance, foreign interference in the domestic democratic system and inter-parliamentary relations.

young women MPs, felt their credibility was often in question and their views were not as respected as men's views. The organization's heckling research found that despite sitting in the same room, MPs heard very different types of heckling. Sixty-seven percent of female MPs reported hearing gendered heckling versus 20 per cent of male MPs.

When the Canadian Press/Samara surveyed Hill staffers, 266 people (including 122 women) responded to 1,500 surveys issued. Just over one quarter of respondents stated they had experienced sexual harassment on Parliament Hill. Ms. Hilderman explained that while some people may question whether this statistic is an overestimation of its prevalence on the Hill, based on people responding to the survey because they wanted to talk about the issue, the survey also misses responses from staff who may have left their job as a result of harassment. According to the research, the perpetrator was usually not the staffer's own MP, but rather their peers or other MPs.

Ms. Hilderman noted that **Rose St. Pierre**, a researcher on the Hill, has interviewed 25 MPs and one Senator on the topic and found they are overwhelmingly very afraid of false accusations. She noted concerns from young women staffers about job prospects if this climate continues.

In terms of a possible path forward, Ms. Hilderman suggested that to combat the problem of underreporting of these abuses, an independent ombudsperson role might be created to counsel people who come forward and track complaints to see if there are patterns of misbehaviour that warrant intervention. To tackle poor management culture on the Hill, where every MP and Senator is essentially a small business, she advocated for more training and supports to educate people.

Julie S. Lalonde, a feminist educator who has spoken on issues of sexual violence in many workplaces and workspaces, told attendees that she would provide five things for participants to do to help solve this problem. Above all, she encouraged the audience to stop reacting to incidents and to think about prevention. Although many people she's presented to have deep cynicism about whether things can change, she says this is a false belief and much can be done to improve the situation.

First, she told parliamentarians they are "not special." She added: "It is not 'different' for you. Don't circle the wagon and talk about it internally. There are unique dynamics, but ultimately it's a workplace." Second, she said we must define the terms. "What are the characteristics of a safe and

equitable workplace?” she asked. Although we must allow different viewpoints, the definition of consent should not be unfamiliar. “We need to have concrete conversations about what we’re fighting for, not just what we’re against,” she counselled.

Third, she said it’s important to remember sexual violence is not just a legal issue, it’s a moral issue. Ms. Lalonde said if “legal” is the bar for deciding what is and is not appropriate, the bar is set much too low. Moreover, if this conversation creates tension in the workplace, participants should ask themselves why there is tension. “You need to trust women,” she stated. “If you can’t trust women, you think women are lying or exaggerating. Trust that the women coming forward are telling the truth. Statistically you are as likely to set your own house on fire for insurance purposes as you are to make a false accusation of rape. But do we say the house ‘allegedly’ caught on fire? No.”

Fourth, determine what we want out of this discussion. Do people want an apology? What if the person is not sincere? Do they want restitution? Or is it just hush money? Ms. Lalonde said the fundamental questions are whether we believe people can change, and what are we doing to create the conditions to let women come forward?

Fifth, Ms. Lalonde explained that “survivors are listening to you. What is your reaction? Are you cynical? Are you dismissive?” In her opinion, there needs to be significant consequences for bad behaviour, because without these consequences it will not change.

Session 2: Foreign Interference in the Democratic Process

In this session, two presenters outlined some questions to consider when thinking about how foreign actors may be interfering with the democratic process.

Presenter **Fenwick McKelvey**, an associate professor in Communication Studies at Concordia University, began his presentation by recounting the story of how CBC’s Great Canadian Wishlist project was undermined by well-organized interest groups. Among the top wishes were: 1. That Canada would abolish abortion 2. That Canada would remain pro-choice 3. That there would be a spiritual revival in our nation, and 4. That Canada would restore the traditional definition of marriage. Advocacy groups

had pushed their issues via digital campaigns, but was there foreign interference in this survey?

Among the enduring lessons from this story, Mr. McKelvey noted that platforms matter, attribution and enforcement are difficult, and foreignness is a problematic way to judge political legitimacy (as these campaigns likely required domestic accomplices). But these lessons apply more broadly when thinking of how to combat state sponsored disinformation campaigns, and illiberal and extremist views that undermine liberal democracies. He suggested that an ensuing policy agenda should include efforts to address attribution issues and the enforcement lag, develop better governance for social media platforms, supporting high-quality journalism and other political information, and discuss a possible code of conduct for political parties to alert others to possible foreign interference.

Michael Peirce, the assistant director of intelligence at CSIS asked if anyone had tweeted that day. When multiple hands went up, he joked that he wouldn’t give the top-secret version of his presentation that included a threat assessment. Mr. Peirce focused on foreign influence that is clandestine and detrimental to Canada. In Canada, he noted, most of this activity is not social media based – it’s human interaction. Using examples drawn from published media reports rather than internal CSIS intelligence of other threats, Mr. Peirce highlighted how clandestine Russian activity tends to be nihilist (destructive, focussing on disrupting democracies and sowing chaos or amplifying domestic extremist sentiment), while the Chinese focus is regime stability (tackling the five poisons, including Falun Gong activities, and supporters of Taiwan). But, he noted, there is also a threat of influence/dominance in certain sectors.

Mr. Peirce flagged three periods open to clandestine foreign influence: before elections (when the nominating process is targeted, during an election (when election finances and regulations are the targets) and following elections (when influence targets political staffers or officials). He agreed with Mr. McKelvey that a Code of Conduct for political parties should be investigated, contending that foreign influence in Canadian elections is not a partisan issue and it is not likely to target individual parties. Tightening loopholes in electoral financing and third-party spending limits (particularly those that were designed when traditional media was dominant and may no longer be adequate) is important, while education and media literacy is also key.

Session 3: Balancing Work and Family Time During the Parliamentary Schedule

In a panel discussion on work-life balance, federal and provincial parliamentarians discussed how they sought to ensure their health and relationships were maintained while managing a busy work schedule. Newfoundland and Labrador MP **Nick Whalen** spoke of how health had become a priority for him, his children and his wife (who has secondary progressive MS). He explained that his friendships with whips and colleagues helped him to cover times when he prioritized family. Mr. Whalen also warned the audience that when you push yourself, your own health can suffer; and, staff won't necessarily know how to help. He contended it's important for parliamentarians to set their own limits.

Ontario MPP **Catherine Fife** suggested that reconciling ambition with family can be very challenging and the immediacy of social media and email has changed things. Her coping strategy has been to intentionally shut down and disconnect for period of time. Ms. Fife described how politicians carry 'emotional labour' around with them all the time and highlighted that divorce rates for politicians are twice the national average. When her husband once asked, "How was your week?" Her response ("You could save me a lot of time if you just follow me on Twitter") didn't go over well. However, she encouraged parliamentarians to remember the value of the work they do. She noted that her daughter, when interviewed for a 'women in politics' project, called her a 'difference maker.' "That's a powerful statement that makes the sacrifices worth it," she concluded.

Yukon MLA **Nils Clarke** explained how life changes when you're a public figure. He said even something as straightforward as shopping for groceries can become such a lengthy process as he stops to speak with constituents, he often encourages his teenage sons to take a separate car in case they want to leave early. While he does have great talks about political issues with his sons, he also tries to make time for regular discussions about music and celebrities. However, Clarke notes that carving out "quality time" with older children doesn't always work as they don't always want to spend that time with you.

Manitoba MP **Daniel Blaikie** has a unique perspective as the son of a parliamentarian and now a parliamentarian himself with children. He said

politics is really a family enterprise/business (not just for a partner/spouse, but also for kids). Mr. Blaikie said politicians need for their family to understand why they're in politics. "They don't want to live it, but they want to know why you're missing a school event or birthday party. Kids need to know the sacrifice they are making is worth it, that the work is important," he said. "The quality of time you spend with your family is important. We don't have much control over the quantity of time with our family, but we do have control over the quality of time."

During a Q&A period, participants described how changes to an assembly's sitting schedule can make their work more family-friendly. Others mentioned that eldercare of relatives is a topic that's often missed in these discussions. Ms. Fife stressed the importance of self-care and revealed that her staff is now scheduling time for her to ensure she takes time off to rest. She noted that while she was resentful of this at first, now it's become part of her workplace culture. An MLA from Nova Scotia reported that his adult children will actually book time through his constituency office to reserve time for important events. "When they're in the book, nothing else competes," he said. A delegate from British Columbia noted that the province's assembly has recently changed the rules about 'strangers in the house' to allow infants to be in the house.

Session 4: Underrepresentation of Women in Parliament

Although it's been 30 years since the CPA conference recognized the underrepresentation of women – an event that led to the creation of the CWP – there has only been a marginal increase in representation federally since that time. The Senate and some provinces have passed the 30 per cent benchmark set, but presenters contended it is still a low threshold.

Former Quebec MP **Eleni Bakopanos** and Equal Voice (EV) Director **Nancy Peckford** updated attendees on their work to promote more representation of women. Ms. Bakopanos made special mention of the concurrent family program at the conference being enormously helpful to her when in Parliament. As a young mother looking to spend time with her kids during the summers, it allowed her to participate in these types of conferences.

Ms. Peckford noted the success of Daughters of the Vote, and how a Status of Women grant to EV has allowed them to work on projects to bring about

systemic change. Ms. Bakopanos explained that EV is looking to encourage long, sustainable change to encourage more women in politics. Recommendations include providing childcare, permitting remote attendance of committee meetings (not only for those with kids, but also with elderly parents), limiting the need to travel, creating predictability by fixing election dates, and making Fridays optional days for MPs (the Quebec Assembly has done this already). Ms. Peckford also contended that elected officials need more staff to make political service more sustainable. She said Equal Voice can be that voice on behalf of politicians since they will not be seen to be self-serving.

Northwest Territories MLA **Julie Green** presented on “Temporary Special Measures in NWT to increase representation of women.” She informed the audience that there is a persistent underrepresentation of women members in NWT: a maximum of three at any one time since 1995, and currently only two. To challenge the status quo, a special motion will be put forth to increase representation to 20 percent by 2023 and 30 percent by 2027. While these are modest goals, Ms. Green said she believes she talks about different things than her male colleagues and additional women MLAs will better reflect the diversity of the territory.

Ms. Green pointed to the Samoan Experience as an example the territory may follow. Samoa, also suffering from longstanding underrepresentation of women, created temporary measures to guarantee seats for women. If fewer than five women were elected, special seats were created, but only for the life of that assembly. She summarized some of the pros and cons of this type of system. Some people have expressed concerns about a two-tier system or argued that quotas create an artificial ceiling. However, others argue that if these measures jump-started women’s participation (the idea of ‘see it, be it’), it would diminish barriers. If these women elected as special representatives performed well, they would likely receive more support in the future.

Manitoba MLA **Colleen Meyer**, who noted that her province currently has 25 per cent representation, stated that men needed to be at the table with women to push for change. She said confidence-building through engagement should be key to help encourage women, and that age should not be a barrier. Ms. Meyer noted that common themes from new and veteran women parliamentarians include aversion to negativity in media and self-doubt about managing

it all. She said networks to support women overcome these obstacles and fears are an important tool.

Ontario MP **Anita Vandenberg** echoed Ms. Green’s comments by highlighting that while Canada is slowly seeing more women in politics, other countries (especially in sub-Saharan Africa) are improving at faster rates than we are. She suggested that countries with quotas/temporary measures or proportional representation elect more women than those without.

Ms. Vandenberg noted that the power of incumbency means that during ‘change’ elections or after an event like a war, more women tend to get elected because they are seen to be ‘change-makers.’ However, even when this occurs there are barriers, including: 1) gender stereotypes and gender norms, (she asked why she was always referred to as a ‘young woman candidate’ or was described with diminutive adjectives?) 2) money networks, 3) lack of reparation and training/capacity building, 4) safety/security, 5) the nomination process. (She revealed that Equal Voice has done studies indicating that when a woman is on the ballot, they are elected about half the time. Canadians, therefore, are comfortable electing women; but at the nomination level party members wonder ‘who will people vote for’). She added that studies suggest 80 per cent of Canadians would vote for a woman, but 80 per cent also believe most people would not.

Ms. Vandenberg said that women are also less likely to think of running for politics. It is not that they are rejecting politics, but simply that they are not even thinking of it. She stated that often women will consider politics when asked by a party, but they will not seek out a nomination until they learn that other are interested in their candidacy. She concluded by ruefully noting that women are sometimes their own worst enemy in this process, and part of the reason they try to block other women is because they see limited space.

During a Q&A period, one participant explained that while it’s important to recruit women, trans people, racialized people and other groups that may be marginalized, parties must give them the infrastructure and support to do well once they’re recruited; otherwise it’s just tokenism.

Session 5 – Inter-Parliamentary Relations (part 1)

Colin Robertson, vice-president and fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, opened this session



CPA Canadian Regional conference attendees pose beneath the Peace Tower before attending a reception jointly hosted by Senate Speaker George Furey and House of Commons Speaker Geoff Regan.

by stating that supporting a rules-based liberal trading order is necessary for our survival. “Canada draws most of its annual income from trade,” he said. “Without trade we would not be where we are today.” Mr. Robertson added that Canadians have earned a place in the global supply chain and one in six jobs in Canada are related to exports.

Laura Dawson, Director of the Wilson Center’s Canada Institute, said bluntly that in terms of trade agreements, the current situation with NAFTA “is as bad as it has ever been.” Ms. Dawson explained that “you just can’t come up with an economic solution to a political problem.” She explained that of 32 NAFTA chapters, nine have been settled, there are issues in other chapters that she believes can be settled, but there are five to six deal-killing issues the White House proposed that we can not get over.

NAFTA issues have also been mixed with American security measures (known as the ‘232 Tariffs’). Ms. Dawson said she doesn’t anticipate these tariffs will be removed until beyond the congressional elections. However, she explained that Canada does have a unique ability to promote itself during these negotiations. “We are not particularly important to US foreign policy,” she stated, “but we are very important to American domestic policy. No other country has the local connections that we have.” She encouraged delegates to use their connections to local representatives, bring business leaders to speak to American officials, and to fan out to show how well the relationship has worked in the past and how it can work well in the future. “There has never been a more dire time in this relationship,” she admitted. Ms. Dawson advocated not taking “yes” for an answer when parliamentarians or business leaders interact or meet their American counterparts. “You have to

practice the directness, the quid pro quo politics," she advised. "Get beyond the meetings."

Session 6: Inter-Parliamentary Relations (part 2)

Ontario Senator **Salma Atallahjan**, who serves as vice-president of the Canadian Group of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), highlighted the importance of trust-building engagement within inter-parliamentary unions. The IPU was created nearly 130 years ago for the peaceful resolution of international disputes. Her work on the IPU's Committee for Middle East Questions has shown her the true extent of this potential. "These interactions may not be pretty. They can be heated, there can be yelling, but dialogue happens," she said. "While often dismissed as talk shops where nothing happens, we parliamentarians know how important talk can be."

Jacques Chagnon, President of Quebec's National Assembly and President of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), spoke of the recent Quebec-Newfoundland Speaker's bilateral agreement and added that the Speaker's position often allows occupants of the Chair to form special connections with other Speakers in the international community. Mr. Chagnon also explained how the professional development programs for parliamentarians and staff that have been created by these organizations have proven extremely successful.

During a Q&A period, one parliamentarian asked the panel how representatives sent to these organizations can convince their colleagues of their value and change the perception that trips to these meetings are junkets. Mr. Chagnon explained that the relationships built through these interactions may not have an easily demonstrable direct and immediate benefit, but the secondary benefits are immense. He also noted that when Canada hosts these meetings the economic benefits, tourism, and other spin-offs are a boon to local communities. Moreover, Mr. Chagnon said that when parliamentarians frame their participation as being 'hosted' by other countries, it can take the sting out of populist attacks about 'junkets.' Another audience member spoke of how a former Senator who was involved in the IPU was frequently called to mediate disputes elsewhere and to advocate on behalf of parliamentarians who have been jailed or may be about to be executed for their political activities. He contended that these are very important organizations for diplomacy and for protecting political freedoms.

Session 7 – Balancing Public and Private Life in the Age of Social Media

In the final conference session, panelists described the ways social media has transformed how politicians are expected to communicate. **Tamara Small**, an associate professor at the University of Guelph, spoke of how academic research has identified trends involving the personalization of social media which can supplant the party's influence at times in messaging. On the personalization spectrum, one side contains posts about personal aspects and non-political activities, a middle ground provides personal opinions and interests on issues that are political but not a party focus, and at the other end there is partisan messaging and communications. Ms. Small indicated that where there is personalization among politics, it provides a greater sense of connection with politician and provides better recall. Interestingly, message personalization backfired amongst strong partisans. She concludes that parliamentarians should keep their audience in mind when publishing on various platforms and also recognize that about two-thirds of Canadians do not follow politicians online. As a result, the audience may be skewed towards journalists, opponents and your own partisans, which may amplify conflict.

Alberta MP **Michelle Rempel** has cultivated a very large following on multiple social media platforms and is recognized by the news media and other parliamentarians as being one of the most successful politicians in the country in terms of online presence and reach. She disagreed with Ms. Small that the audience for social media amongst the general population is small and explained that she tracks statistics in terms of audience impressions that suggest much engagement. Moreover, she stated it's generally more valuable for her to be speaking into her phone than to news media such as the CBC because she can reach more people in an individual way.

Ms. Rempel described her social media content as being related to her work as a parliamentarian. Although she likes the concept of individualization, she described it as more of a sense of 'authenticity.' She noted that, based on her impression, politicians who let staff manage their social media messaging are much less successful in generating followers than those who develop a voice of their own. She does not mention her private life at all online and suggests that Canadian media will keep that off limits unless 1) you're a hypocrite or 2) you make it public. Finally, she

encouraged attendees to distinguish between trolling (inflammatory posts and unfounded criticism) and abuse (threats to your person). Her advice is to block accounts engaging in the former, report the latter to authorities.

Alberta MLA **Thomas Dang** explained that politicians have been using these types of tools for 20-25 years now. While the names of the media are different, the desire to connect remains the same. He suggested that social media simply allows parliamentarians to contact with constituents and other members of the public faster. Mr. Dang also stated that social media can be an enormous benefit to politicians in terms of keeping in connect with their families while in session or travelling on business. For example, livestreaming and video sharing can help them to be 'present' during important events they would otherwise miss.

Quebec MP **Alexandra Mendès** explained how Quebec's parliamentarians navigated posting in more than one language. This dual function can lead to a heavier social media footprint but can make interactions more difficult. She said she uses her Facebook Politician page to advocate for issues that are of a concern to her and her constituents (for example, animal welfare). Ms. Mendès also told the audience a story of how social media can skew what a politician hears. In 2016, she planned to have her Canada Day event in the parking lot of the local Islamic Community and Cultural Centre. A constituent posted a mailing she had sent advertising the event online and questioned why the event was connected to a religious and cultural organization. Although the event was using the parking lot and not

the facility, it created a firestorm and generated many Islamophobic comments and threats; the RCMP became involved. But, aside from the initial poster, Ms. Mendès noted that none of these social media posters were from her riding. She says despite this incident, her experience with social media has been positive.

In a question and answer period, one audience member asked how politicians, as public figure, could accept 'blocking' members of the public from following them. Ms. Rempel reported that she had developed a flow chart that is posted on her website and Facebook to explain how she makes her decision, but ultimately if people aren't being civil, she said she does not entertain it. "I don't have to accept abuse," she stated. She also distinguished between the block and mute functions on social media. While one audience member noted that 'muting' an objectionable poster prevents a politician from seeing notifications of their posts without alerting the poster, Ms. Rempel explained that muting a poster still allows them to use the parliamentarian's social media platform to spew their abusive or hateful messaging.

Ms. Rempel also noted that, in her opinion, parliamentarians are not being as careful as they could be or should be in terms of collecting data and respecting privacy. She explained that she always clearly divides the data she collects from parliamentary and political activities and she always obtains consent. She does this because the conversation on data collecting is still early in terms of privacy rights and she doesn't ever want to have to separate it if new laws are put in place.

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