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# 50th Canadian Regional CPA Conference

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Gary Levy

*The Fiftieth Conference of the Canadian Region, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association takes place in Québec City July 15-21, 2012. This article traces the evolution of the Canadian Region with particular emphasis on previous conferences organized by the Québec Branch.*

According to Ian Imrie, former Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Region, the rationale for a meeting of Canadian representatives within the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was partly to help legislators develop an understanding of the parliamentary process. Also,

If we are to have a united country it is important that elected members from one part of the country visit other areas and gain an appreciation of the problems and challenges of their fellow citizens. I do not think I ever attended a conference, including those in Ottawa, where there were not a number of legislators visiting that part of the country for the first time. One should not underestimate the value of such experiences.<sup>1</sup>

## The First Quarter Century

The impetus for creating the association occurred in 1958 when Nova Scotia celebrated its 200th anniversary of representative government. To mark the occasion an invitation was sent to all Canadian legislatures inviting them to meet in Halifax on September 29, 1958.

When the Nova Scotia Speaker came down with the flu, Premier Robert Stanfield took over as host. Neither Manitoba nor British Columbia took up the invitation. Québec accepted but its delegates were prevented from attending by a severe storm which swept through the province shortly before the opening. A total of 45 delegates are listed as attending but 25 of them were from Nova Scotia.

Among the delegates were Premier Alexander Matheson of Prince Edward Island and four Speakers: Roland Michener (House of Commons), James Darling (Saskatchewan), Peter Dawson (Alberta) and Alfred Downer (Ontario). From Westminster Ronald Russell and Henry Drummond-Wolff attended as did the Secretary General of the CPA, Howard d'Egville.

Many provincial branches of CPA existed in name only but the idea of a permanent Canadian association appealed to Speaker Michener.

We can, I think, strengthen the Canadian Federation by these conferences. I am sure that this meeting, though it brings all too few people from the western provinces to the Maritimes, demonstrates the value of it. I am sure that the other members from the West, who have not visited Halifax would say that today their understanding of the Canadian Federation would be greatly helped by conferences held first in the East, then in the West and the Centre.<sup>2</sup>

Premier Stanfield wanted to know more about what was going on in other legislatures.

We get *Hansard* from the House of Commons, but as to what goes on in other legislatures, all we know is what we see in the press. .... It would be useful to know about a discussion in Alberta about some particular problem. It may be the same sort of problem that the legislature of Nova Scotia is confronted with.<sup>3</sup>

Others were favourable to the idea, however, a number of questions were raised.

- How often should conferences be held?
- Should they discuss policy issues or be limited to procedure?
- Should there be an Executive Council and how should it be composed?
- Would it be better to start with subnational activities rather than a national conference?
- Should conferences be open to all members or aimed mostly at speakers and clerks?
- What would be the language of conferences?

By the end of the afternoon a clear consensus existed in favour of creating a new organization. Henry Reardon seconded by Richard Donahoe, both from Nova Scotia moved that, "This Area Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association recommends (1) The holding of regular Area meetings and (2) That an Area Council be established to regulate and arrange such meetings in this area."

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Gary Levy is Editor of the Canadian Parliamentary Review.

## CPA Regional Conferences, Seminars and Presiding Officers' Meetings Since 1958

	Regional Conference	Regional Seminar		Regional Conference	Regional Seminar	Presiding Officer Meeting
1958	1 <sup>st</sup> Nova Scotia	—	1984	24 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia	—	1 <sup>st</sup> Alberta
1960	2 <sup>nd</sup> Manitoba	—	1985	25 <sup>th</sup> Québec	10 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	2 <sup>nd</sup> British Columbia
1961	3 <sup>rd</sup> Québec	—	1986	26 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	11 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ottawa
1962	4 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	—	1987	27 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	12 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	4 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba
1963	5 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	—	1988	28 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	13 <sup>th</sup> British Columbia	5 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick
1964	6 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	—	1989	29 <sup>th</sup> Alberta	14 <sup>th</sup> Northwest Territories	6 <sup>th</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador
1965	7 <sup>th</sup> Alberta	—	1990	30 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick	15 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba	7 <sup>th</sup> Ontario
1966	*	—	1991	31 <sup>st</sup> British Columbia	16 <sup>th</sup> Yukon	8 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia
1967	8 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick	—	1992	32 <sup>nd</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador	17 <sup>th</sup> Québec	9 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island
1968	9 <sup>th</sup> British Columbia	—	1993	33 <sup>rd</sup> Ottawa	—	10 <sup>th</sup> Québec
1969	10 <sup>th</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador	—	1994	*	18 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	11 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan
1970	11 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	—	1995	34 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia	19 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	12 <sup>th</sup> Northwest Territories
1971	12 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia	—	1996	35 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba	20 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick	13 <sup>th</sup> Yukon
1972	13 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba	—	1997	36 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	**	14 <sup>th</sup> Alberta
1973	14 <sup>th</sup> Québec	1 <sup>st</sup> Ottawa	1998	37 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	21 <sup>st</sup> Alberta	15 <sup>th</sup> British Columbia
1974	15 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ottawa	1999	38 <sup>th</sup> Québec	22 <sup>nd</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador	16 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa
1975	16 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	—	2000	39 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	23 <sup>rd</sup> Nova Scotia	17 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba
1976	17 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ottawa	2001	40 <sup>th</sup> Alberta	24 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	18 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick
1977	*	4 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	2002	41 <sup>st</sup> New Brunswick	25 <sup>th</sup> Québec	19 <sup>th</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador
1978	18 <sup>th</sup> Alberta	**	2003	42 <sup>nd</sup> British Columbia	26 <sup>th</sup> Nunavut	20 <sup>th</sup> Ontario
1979	19 <sup>th</sup> New Brunswick	5 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	2004	*	—	21 <sup>st</sup> Ottawa
1980	20 <sup>th</sup> British Columbia	6 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	2005	43 <sup>rd</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador	27 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	22 <sup>nd</sup> Nova Scotia
1981	21 <sup>st</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador	7 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia	2006	44 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	28 <sup>th</sup> British Columbia	23 <sup>rd</sup> Northwest Territories
1982	22 <sup>nd</sup> Northwest Territories	8 <sup>th</sup> Ottawa	2007	45 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba	29 <sup>th</sup> Yukon	24 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island
1983	23 <sup>rd</sup> Manitoba	9 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	2008	46 <sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia	30 <sup>th</sup> Manitoba	25 <sup>th</sup> Québec
* International CPA Conference held in Canada.  ** In 1978 and 1997 the Regional Seminar was incorporated into a larger seminar organized by the Québec Branch of CPA.			2009	47 <sup>th</sup> Ontario	31 <sup>st</sup> Northwest Territories	26 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan
			2010	48 <sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan	32 <sup>nd</sup> Ontario	27 <sup>th</sup> Yukon
			2011	49 <sup>th</sup> Prince Edward Island	33 <sup>rd</sup> New Brunswick	28 <sup>th</sup> Nunavut
			2012	50 <sup>th</sup> Québec		29 <sup>th</sup> Alberta

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Harold Winch from the House of Commons proposed that "The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Speaker of the Senate, the Speakers of the several provincial legislatures and one extra member from each legislature be constituted a Provisional Area Council."

The Council met for the first time in Ottawa on January 15-16, 1960. It was agreed that the new organization would not attempt to discuss matters which would divide delegates on party lines. Conferences would be held every year rather than every two years and they would rotate among the various jurisdictions. The number of delegates to a conference was set at four for each provincial delegation and ten from the federal parliament. There was no provision for representation from the northern territories.

On the question of language both French and English would be recognized as equal languages but there was no provision for simultaneous interpretation.

The most difficult issue was the question of a permanent executive to replace the large provisional council. It was proposed in Ottawa that the executive be composed of Speaker Abram Harrison of Manitoba (host of the next meeting) plus Speakers Darling, Downer, Maurice Tellier of Québec with Speaker Michener as Chair. T.R. Montgomery, a table officer in Ottawa, became Executive Treasurer in addition to his role as Secretary of the Federal Branch.

When the second conference convened in September 1960 half these individuals had left office. It was decided that henceforth the Council would consist of the twelve federal and provincial Speakers.

Most recommendations of the executive were adopted in Winnipeg but not before a lively discussion of a proposal for an independent secretariat. Daniel Johnson, who would later become Premier of Québec, felt the Association needed its own staff or it would be dependent on the London secretariat, or perhaps more to the point, a secretariat in Ottawa. Neither, he thought, would provide him the kind of support he needed.

As a provincial member I would like to have a secretariat through which I would be supplied with – let us say a copy of the principle bills that are being presented, or have been adopted, in each of our respective legislatures. I would like to receive the Budget Speech of all the provincial Finance Ministers, and I would like to get a copy of the Estimates as they are brought down in the different parliaments of our provinces. I would like to get some of the material which would be of great use to me as a provincial member – especially a provincial member in Opposition.<sup>4</sup>

Johnson's motion was seconded by Richard Donahoe but Sir Allister McMullin of Australia, Chairman of the General Council of CPA, thought it was unnecessary.

The Association could now do exactly what Mr. Johnson was requesting without an independent secretariat. Others were content to let the new executive consider the matter. Johnson suspected that the objective of his motion may not have been well understood as he had to make the case in his second language. In any event his motion for an independent secretariat was defeated by a voice vote.

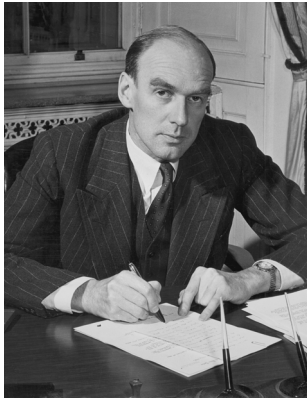
Money was also discussed. The provisional council had suggested a fee of \$2.00 per member which would provide about \$1600. The issue was not resolved but the practice developed whereby the host province would pay for meeting costs and hospitality but each delegation would pay the travel, accommodation and per diem expenses for its own delegates. Each branch would set its own membership fee.

Between 1958 and 1970 every province and the federal branch took a turn at hosting a Canadian Area (as it was then called) Conference. The 1961 conference in Québec City was typical of the early conferences. Forty-five delegates attended from Parliament and eight provinces (British Columbia was in a provincial election and in Newfoundland, the province was in the midst of severe forest fires). There were three foreign legislators, all from the United Kingdom and two table officers, Montgomery and C.B. Koester, Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

Nova Scotia had set the pattern by establishing an ambitious schedule of travel and social events. The 1961 Conference combined business and pleasure with emphasis definitely on the latter. For example on arrival in Québec the assembled delegates boarded the "S.S. Tadoussac" for two days of cruising along the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers with stops at La Malbaie, St-Siméon, Tadoussac and Bagotville. During the cruise the Speakers set the agenda for three business sessions. After returning to Québec delegates spent one day touring the old city, with a luncheon hosted by Premier Jean Lesage, a meeting with Mayor Hamel and a reception at the residence of Lieutenant Governor Onésime Gagnon.

The final day delegates met in the legislature where they were welcomed by Premier Lesage who gave a brief outline of Québec's unique history and its attachment to parliamentary institutions. The rest of the meeting was chaired by Speaker Lucien Cliche of Québec who called upon the leader of each delegation to say a few words. Following these short thank you speeches the conference adjourned.

The sessions held on board ship dealt mainly with CPA business such as reports from provincial delegations on activities, programs, membership



Individuals instrumental in founding the Canadian Region of CPA. (l-r) Robert Stanfield, Premier of Nova Scotia, took over as host of the first meeting due to the illness of the Nova Scotia Speaker. Sir Howard d'Egville, Secretary of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association first proposed the idea of the regional association of legislators within CPA. T.R. Montgomery, a table officer for the House of Commons, was named first Secretary Treasurer. Roland Michener, Speaker of the House of Commons, became first Chairman.

and so on. The substantive topics proposed for discussion included the reporting of debates, the role of the Opposition, the value of committees, delegated legislation, indemnities, retirement provisions, and procedure. In fact only two of the topics provoked any significant discussion – reporting of debates and indemnity issues. There were no interventions whatsoever on committees, delegated legislation or procedure. The entire session on the role of opposition consisted of a single short statement by Judy Lamarsh who suggested newly elected members needed some kind of help in learning how Parliament works.

The problem with this and other early CPA conferences was that topics for discussion were not known in advance. There was no fixed time period for each topic and no designated person or province to lead off the discussion. This began to change in the mid 1960s as several important changes took place.

Perhaps the most significant event was the hiring of Ian Imrie by the House of Commons in 1964. The new Speaker, Alan Macnaughton, had come from a business background and was shocked to discover the way the House was administered. He ordered a complete study by a special branch of the Public Service Commission. One of their recommendations called for creation of three new positions – a Director of Finance, a Director of Legislative Services and a Co-ordinator of Parliamentary Associations.

Imrie had been working in the Department of Northern Affairs when Speaker Macnaughton interviewed him for the position of Co-ordinator. In those days Canada belonged to only four parliamentary associations – the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the NATO Parliamentary Association and the Canada-United

States Inter-Parliamentary Group. Two of them, the IPU and CPA had major international conferences scheduled for Canada in 1965 and 1966. The task of co-ordinating Canada's inter-parliamentary relations had fallen to various table officers on a part time basis but with the House sitting almost non stop there was no way they could make the kind of commitment necessary to organise these conferences.

As Imrie gradually took over responsibility for CPA from Montgomery he realised that if the Canadian Region was to survive it had to put more emphasis on the content of conferences. One early decision was to enlist the services of the new Chief of the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament.

Philip Laundry was author of *An Encyclopedia of Parliament* (1961) and the *Office of Speaker* (1964). A recognized expert in parliamentary procedure, he came to Canada as an adviser to the Special Committee on Procedure and Organization chaired by Speaker Macnaughton. In 1965 he joined the Parliamentary Library which was mandated to support Canadian participation in inter-parliamentary associations. Laundry could have interpreted this mandate in a limited way involving the provision of briefing material to delegations but he became an enthusiastic participant in CPA activities working on everything from planning conferences to editing the final transcripts.

At his very first conference in 1968 he led off discussion on two topics – Research Services for Parliamentarians and Financial Procedure. The following year he was lead speaker or resource person for three workshops: Parliamentary Privilege, Parliament and Its Public Relations, and Recent Reform Developments in the House of Commons. Over the next two decades under the influence of Imrie and Laundry conferences moved





The modern CPA Region was shaped by (l-r) Ian Imrie long-time Executive Secretary-Treasurer of both the Canadian Region and the federal branch, Senator Alister Grosart who worked on financial and administrative reforms during the 1970s and Philip Laundry of the Library of Parliament.

away from largely social gatherings to become more professional development sessions for the men and women who fill legislative offices across Canada.

But change did not happen without controversy. At one conference tension developed between the presiding officers and other delegates over the agenda. George Ben of Ontario suggested that Speakers seemed to have a dominant role in the association.

I am completely perplexed by this organization in trying to determine exactly what it is and from sitting here today, Mr. Speaker, I can't decide. I don't know whether this is supposed to be a federal-provincial conference ...Is this an organization of Speakers? Is this a little social club that the Speakers have that enable them to travel across Canada?<sup>5</sup>

His main problem was the agenda and the lack of information for delegates.

Now I would suggest that when an agenda is prepared that it be sent out to everybody with background material on it.... If you want to increase the effects of this Association then I think you ought to be a little freer with the knowledge that you already possess. I think that is owed to the people who come to these Area Conferences."<sup>6</sup>

To meet such criticism the Speakers began meeting in Ottawa in June at which time they would discuss CPA matters and the conference agenda. The Library of Parliament began to circulate briefing papers not only to the federal delegation but to the provinces as well.

At the 1968 conference Larry Desjardins of Manitoba introduced a motion that "The Canadian Area Council recognize both French and English as official languages of the Association and provide simultaneous translation for future Canadian Area Conferences starting in 1969."<sup>7</sup> This led to a rather acrimonious debate with some members arguing that English and French were

already official languages and it was up to the host to provide on interpretation. After many interventions that touched on some sensitive issues in Canadian history, a wording was found that was satisfactory to all.<sup>8</sup> In practice Imrie resolved the issue by making the cost involved for simultaneous interpretation an expense of the organization rather than a responsibility of the host.

The 1973 conference in Québec City reflected changes that had been going on for some time. Attendance was increasing. Seventy four members from Parliament and every province attended the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference which was hosted by Speaker Jean-Noël Lavoie. Observers were included from Yukon and the Northwest Territories as well as the United Kingdom Parliament. Most legislatures sent a senior procedural officer. There was a large Conference Secretariat headed by the Secretary General of the National Assembly René Blondin. The task of chairing most of the conference fell to Deputy Speaker Harry Blank.

As in 1961 the greater part of the first day was devoted to a discussion of CPA business including the proposal for a new Regional Seminar. The social side was not neglected. Ottawa had organized a special programme for accompanying persons in 1970 and this became a permanent part of subsequent conferences. In 1973 delegates and accompanying persons had the option of taking a day trip to Montreal or to the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region with a visit to the Daniel Johnson Dam on the Manicouagan River.

The greatest difference with the 1961 conference was the discussion of substantive issues. Among the topics discussed in some detail were Question Period, the televising of debates and the recent adoption of significant new rules by the National Assembly, known informally as *le code Lavoie*.

The final session featured an interesting discussion on whether the association should tackle more political

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## Quebecers Who Played a Key Role in CPA Activities, 1958-1982



**Speaker Lucien Cliche**  
Chair, 1961 Conference



**Speaker Jean-Noël Lavoie**  
Chair, 1973 Conference



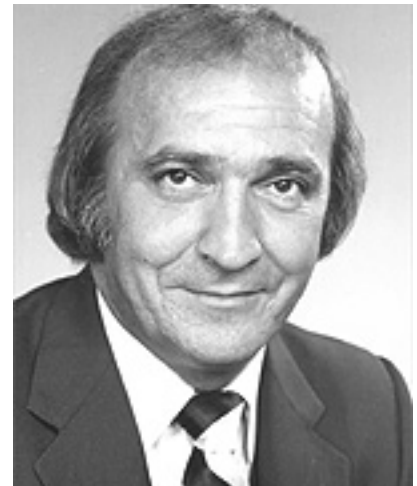
**Deputy Speaker Harry Blank**  
Provincial representative to  
International Executive of CPA



**Speaker Clément Richard**  
Chair, 1978 Seminar



**Christian Comeau**  
Original member, Editorial Board,  
*Canadian Parliamentary Review*



**Speaker Claude Vaillancourt**  
Chair, Task Force on CPA 1982

and controversial topics and perhaps debate resolutions to be submitted to governments. Members from Alberta and Manitoba favoured such an approach whereas others preferred to keep discussions largely on procedural matters rather than public policy. The issue came up during the closing press conference. Speaker Lavoie summarized the debate and concluded "we have no intention of creating a 12th Parliament in Canada."

By 1974 a new activity had been added, the Canadian Regional Seminar, but the administrative framework had not changed since 1958. As Senator Allister Grosart observed: "the conference has no secretariat, no funds, no letterhead, no legal entity. This is an historic anachronism."<sup>9</sup>

He had recently been named to an international CPA committee to review the finances of the association and he offered to do the same for the Canadian Region. A sub-committee consisting of Speakers from Ontario, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Québec along with Senator Grosart and Maurice Dupras from the federal branch was formed to put together rules that could serve as a legal basis for the Region. Among other things Senator Grosart suggested that the Region have its own budget and bank account. He suggested the provincial and territorial branches contribute financially to the 1977 international conference that would be held in Ottawa.

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The Region had recently been given the right to choose a second Canadian international representative to the CPA Executive as a result of changes to the CPA constitution. As the second person would come from a provincial jurisdiction, an election was held in 1975. Harry Blank defeated Speaker Gerald Amerongen of Alberta for this three year term position. Subsequent vacancies have been filled by rotation among the provinces and territories in accordance with an agreed upon formula.

### New Activities

For years Canadian legislators had attended the Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure in London. It offered an intensive two week course designed to get newly elected Members up to speed about how parliament works. It was very popular among members being groomed to play leading roles in their legislatures as Speakers, committee chairmen or house leaders. In 1972, Speaker Fred Dewhurst of Saskatchewan suggested the Canadian Region offer its own seminar on practice and procedure for Canadian legislators. Senator Grosart liked the idea and after securing support and funding from the House and Senate Speakers he asked Ian Imrie and Philip Laundry to make it happen.

The first Regional Seminar took place in Ottawa in November 1973. It lasted a full week. Every province was invited to send three delegates and one observer. Each Territory was entitled to one delegate and one observer. With his usual enthusiasm for CPA, Philip Laundry put the full resources of the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament at the disposal of the Seminar. He and Deputy Director Henriette Immarigeon prepared a lengthy procedural questionnaire that was distributed to legislators in all jurisdictions. A research officer was assigned to analyse and compile the information into a background document distributed at the seminar. Other research papers were prepared on the various topics for the session.

- General rules of debate;
- Closure and allocation of time
- Broadcasting of debates
- Members facilities and services
- Questions to ministers
- Committees
- Financial procedures
- The Legislative Process and Private members' business
- The Speakership

Seminar leaders were drawn from the senior members of all parties and included four Conservatives: Opposition House Leader Tom Bell, Deputy Speaker Robert McCleave, former Speaker, Marcel Lambert

and Ged Baldwin. Liberals included John Reid and Ovide Laflamme. André Fortin of Social Credit led one session as did Max Saltsman of the NDP.

One session was devoted to a matter that did not bear directly on parliamentary procedure: the division of powers between federal and provincial governments. It was led by Senator Eugene Forsey.

The format called for seminar leaders to briefly introduce the subjects, speak about federal practices, invite comments from delegates and generally act as resources persons for the session. Following the seminar the consensus was that it had provided a valuable learning experience and a similar seminar should be held in Ottawa the following autumn.

The 1974 seminar, also a week long event, covered many of the same areas. This time the majority of topics were introduced by provincial delegates with federal MPs acting as chairmen and commentators. Once again, the federal resource people were senior parliamentarians including Liberals Keith Penner, John Reid, Ian Watson, Mark MacGuigan, Jean-Jacques Blais and Conservatives Allan Lawrence, Cliff McIsacc and R.G. Fairweather. One session, the Constitutional Evolution of the Northwest Territories, featured a presentation by NWT Commissioner Hodgson. As in 1973 verbatim proceedings of the seminar were published and distributed to all members.

The next two seminars followed the same format. In 1977 the Québec delegation included three members (Gérald Godin, Guy Bisaillon and Gilbert Paquette) of the Parti Québécois which had formed government in 1976. It was one of the first opportunities to bring together federalist and sovereigntist legislators in a parliamentary forum. A session on the use of referenda in a democratic society, led to an animated, but civil, debate on one of the most controversial issues in Canadian politics.

Following the 1977 seminar a discussion was held on the future of the seminar program. Speaker Woodroffe of New Brunswick felt that the federal branch had too much control over the choice of topics and speakers as well as dates and timing.

Québec also wanted to see the seminar rotate among the provinces. In June 1978 at the Regional Council meeting in Ottawa, Speaker Clément Richard proposed that the next seminar be held in Québec City and follow a different format. The seminar would have a theme and in addition to the usual delegations from across Canada and the United Kingdom, he wanted to invite representatives from the United States, Belgium, France, Senegal and Jamaica. The conference would feature both plenary sessions and workshops.



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When Speaker Richard proposed the idea he clearly intended it to be the 5<sup>th</sup> CPA Regional Seminar.<sup>10</sup> For reasons lost in the sands of history and the politics of the day, that distinction went to the 1979 seminar in Ontario. Nevertheless a Québec seminar entitled “The British Parliamentary System: An Anachronism or a Modern Reality?” went ahead in 1978 as proposed by Speaker Richard.

The plenary sessions featured Robert Burns, Québec Minister of State for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform, André Chandernagor, of the French National Assembly, Floyd Riddick, retired parliamentarian and adviser to the United States Senate, Michael Rush, Professor of Political Science at the University of Exeter and Professor Léon Dion from the Department of Political Science at Laval University.

Three workshops were also held. The first, on the role of political parties, featured John Reid, MP and Professor Réjean Pelletier of Laval University. The second was on the control of delegated legislation. Speakers were Nevil Johnson of Nuffield College at Oxford University and Gary Levy from the Library of Parliament. The third was on the scrutiny of the administration with presentations by Paul Fox of the University of Toronto and André Bernard of the University du Québec à Montréal. Verbatim proceedings including all the background documents were published by the National Assembly.<sup>11</sup>

Ontario decided to follow the Québec pattern and the 1979 seminar was on the theme of Committees. It also included many non parliamentary experts and special guests from abroad. When the seminar returned to Ottawa in 1980 some of the innovations introduced by Québec and Ontario were continued. For example there was a theme “Challenges facing the parliamentarian in the modern world” There was also a concerted attempt to involve more outside experts and high profile personalities.

Speaker Jeanne Sauvé acted as moderator for a panel discussion on the topic of the Parliamentarians and the Media which included George Bain, former newspaperman for the *Toronto Star* and Head of the School of Journalism at King’s College, Halifax; Richard Daignault, of *Le Soleil*, Allan Fotheringham, of *Southam News*, and W.A. Wilson, a freelance political columnist. Two former party leaders Tommy Douglas and Robert Stanfield, offered suggestions to improve the effectiveness of parliamentarians.

Beginning in 1980, the seminar alternated between Ottawa and the provinces but since 1986 Ottawa has hosted only once.

Two other new activities were launched in 1978. One was establishment of a publication originally known

as the *Canadian Regional Review*. Despite the singular importance of parliament to Canadian political life there was not a single journal devoted exclusively to the study of parliamentary institutions.

The idea for a Canadian publication was mentioned occasionally at Regional Conferences. For example in 1972 a Québec delegate, Denis Hardy noted that the CPA had *The Parliamentarian* which was published in Great Britain:

I wonder whether we should not have a similar Canadian review, quite modest, indeed and not too expensive but with a Canadian content in which each province could report regularly on its activities. There could be one or two editorials on parliamentary problems. Members of Parliament and ordinary people who are concerned about problems of parliamentary life could submit articles for publication.<sup>12</sup>

The idea gained momentum in the mid 1970s when Ian Imrie accompanied a Canadian delegation to Australia. He noticed a newsletter which summarised developments in various Australian legislatures. At his urging in 1977 the Regional Council appointed a provisional Editorial Board to pursue the idea. The Board consisted of Dr. Henry Muggah, Clerk of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, Gordon Barnhart, Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, John Holtby Clerk Assistant in Ontario, Christian Comeau from the Legislative Library of the Québec National Assembly along with Philip Laundry and Ian Imrie. The Board elected Dr. Muggah as its first Chairman.

Over the years dozens of members and staff have contributed to the *Review*. Québec has always been a strong supporter. Speakers Lorrain, Saintonge, Charbonneau, Bissonnet, and Vallières all contributed articles as have three future Secretary-generals, Pierre Duchesne, François Côté and Michel Bonsaint.

Another activity started in 1978 was the Atlantic Parliamentary Conference. The first such meeting was held in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. It brought together legislators from the four Atlantic provinces along with observers from Parliament, the United Kingdom and other jurisdictions. It is a much smaller and informal activity than either the annual conference or the seminar but is tightly focussed on topics of interest to east coast members and has been held more or less annually since 1978.

### **The Task Force and the “Golden Age”**

At virtually every CPA conference between 1958 and 1981 time was set aside to discuss ways to improve CPA but little was done aside from the Grosart changes in the 1970s. In 1982 the Canadian Regional Council appointed a Task Force to do a thorough study of the organization.



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The original chair was Speaker Claude Vaillancourt of Québec. After his appointment to the bench Richard Guay replaced him as the Québec member and Arthur Donahoe of Nova Scotia took over as chair. Other members of the Task Force were Keith Penner of the Federal Branch, Speaker John M. Turner of Ontario and Speaker Harvey Schroeder of British Columbia (until he was named to cabinet and replaced by Speaker Walter Davidson). The adoption of Task Force recommendations in 1983 resulted in transformation of the organization from one that was largely dominated by the federal branch to a federal-provincial (territorial) entity.

Since 1958 the Speaker of the House of Commons had chaired the Canadian Regional Council and played a predominant role in the affairs of the Association. Some Speakers were more interested in CPA than others and during the Speakership of Jeanne Sauvé a number of provincial speakers urged that Council be reformed to reflect the autonomy of the Branches. The Task Force proposed that an Executive Committee be established consisting of a Chairman (host of the annual conferences), a 1<sup>st</sup> vice-chairman (chair of the branch next in line to host the conference), a 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-president (chair of the branch second in line), and the two regional representatives to CPA (one federal and one provincial). The duties of each was outlined by the Task Force.

Another recommendation dealt with a long standing financial irritant.

It is not always clearly understood that the Region's funds are absolutely autonomous and that the House of Commons administration has no authority whatsoever to oversee their use. To remedy this situation, which sometimes causes difficulties, the Task Force recommends that a separate audit is required and that the Regional Council appoint a separate professional outside auditor as soon as possible.<sup>13</sup>

The Task Force recommended the budget of the Region be increased from \$52,000 to \$80,000 for 1984-85. The federal Branch would paid 48% with the other 52% divided among the provinces and territories based more or less on their population.<sup>14</sup> This was later changed to a formula based on seats in each legislature with Ottawa paying 50% and the provinces and territories paying 50% in proportion to their number of members.

The Task Force took up the old question of whether the Region should have its own independent secretariat. It concluded such a step was "premature" and would pose a number of practical and financial problems. The facilities of the Parliamentary Relations Secretariat in Ottawa and the Library of Parliament would continue to provide support.

The Task Force also considered a proposal that would have merged the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* with another publication, *Parliamentary Government*. It opted, on the advice of the Editorial Board, to maintain the *Review* which was becoming well known in the parliamentary community.

Finally, the Task Force recommended creation of a Program Enrichment Fund to support special projects. The first beneficiary of the fund was an Ottawa consulting firm that specialized in working for parliamentary committees. The Parliamentary Centre for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade headed by Peter Dobell proposed a seminar for legislators on how to lobby the United States Congress. The Centre retained the services of Jo Oberstar, wife of a Congressman from Minnesota, to organize the initial seminar held in Washington on September 17-19, 1985.<sup>15</sup>

Seventeen MLAs from nine jurisdictions attended. In light of positive feedback the Parliamentary Centre organized other seminars on various subjects related to Canadian-American relations between 1986 and 2003 at a cost of between \$12,000 and \$20,000 per year. The federal branch was always reluctant to participate since MPs belong to the Canada-US Inter-Parliamentary Group. When provincial participation started to wane the funding ended in 2004 with the money being redirected to support the newly formed Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.

Only one other project was ever approved under the Programme Enrichment Fund. A Conference on the Parliamentary Tradition in Canada was held in Québec City in March 1987. It brought together academics and legislators from every legislature to discuss the state of parliamentary government in Canada. The Canadian Region provided a \$5,000 grant to get the project off the ground with additional funding coming from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Study of Parliament Group. Speaker Pierre Lorrain made available the resources of the National Assembly which greatly facilitated the conference. The end result was a text book on provincial legislatures published by the University of Toronto Press in 1989.<sup>16</sup>

### **Conferences and Seminars 1983-1994**

The Canadian Regional Seminar continued to focus largely on procedure for new members. With a new government in Ottawa after 1984 and the winds of political change blowing in Ontario and elsewhere there was lots of interest in the seminars.

Delegates from the Senate, House of Commons and Ontario were the most frequent presenters at seminars during this period but every other province and territory had at least one lead presenter. Often

non elected experts were invited as guest speakers including Auditor General Kenneth Dye, Professors Duff Spafford, Donald Smiley and Desmond Morton, lawyers Deborah Coyne and Lawrence Greenspon.

More than half the sessions consisted of a panel rather than a single speaker thereby allowing more members to participate and providing different perspectives on the issue. Occasionally policy issues, such as the environment, were discussed but it was done from the perspective of what a private member could do to influence public policy in this area.

The 1983 seminar in Saskatchewan featured an Oxford Union style debate<sup>17</sup> on the resolution that “the American Congressional System is better suited to meet the needs of a modern democratic society than the British parliamentary system”. Supporting the motion were Keith Penner, MP and Dr. Morris Shumiatcher, a local attorney. Defending the parliamentary system were Sir Charles Gordon, Clerk of the British House of Commons and Stephen Neary, MHA from Newfoundland.

One seminar was organized by Québec during this period, in 1992 to mark the bicentennial of representative government in Québec.

The International Symposium on Democracy brought together not only the usual delegations from Canadian provinces but also representatives from the Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française and other organizations with which Québec has relations. A total of 400 individuals attended with representatives from 82 legislatures, 27 international organizations, 23 media representatives and 22 embassies or consulates. It was one of the largest

groups ever assembled in Canada to discuss the issue of parliamentary democracy.<sup>18</sup>

The symposium was organized around six themes: Parliamentary institutions, the economy, municipal and local government, the media, culture and the future of democracy. The former United Nations Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar was Honourary Chairman.

Each theme had five or six guest speakers one of whom was from Canada or Québec. They included: James Jerome, former Speaker of the House of Commons, Pierre Pettigrew, an economist who would later become a minister in the Canadian government, Victor Goldbloom, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Girve Fretz, Chair of the federal branch of CPA, Raymond Saint-Pierre a journalist in Québec, Jacques Dufresne, a Québec philosopher and writer, and Ed Broadbent former leader of the NDP and President of the International Centre for Human Rights. Proceedings were published by the Québec National Assembly.

Regional conferences were held every year from 1983-93 and there was a significant increase in the number of non parliamentarians invited to speak. Even one Premier, Grant Devine of Saskatchewan, took part in a business session and cabinet ministers from various provinces also participated as did deputy ministers, heads of crown corporations, leaders from the non governmental sector.

The Oxford Union style debate was used frequently at conferences. For example at the 1983 conference in Winnipeg the agenda included an item on the resolution that “politician is a dirty word.” Supporting the resolution was Winnipeg journalist and broadcaster, Peter Warren. His opponent was Speaker Donahoe. Other resolutions included:

- that Canada is being needlessly balkanized by the increasing scope and complexity of provincial residency requirements.
- that conflict of interest law is an unnecessary infringement of members’ privacy.
- that government spending should be increased to provide an economic stimulus.

On a few occasions debaters intervened after their presentation to make it clear that they had agreed to support a position that did not necessarily coincide with their own personal views. But in general the debate format proved quite popular as it allowed more members to participate and required some preparation by the debaters.

In July 1985 Québec hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> CPA conference and as befits a silver anniversary the host branch tried to make it a special event. One idea was to invite Roland Michener, former Speaker and Governor General who had played such an important role in the establishment of the Region. Another idea was to



As Speaker in Nova Scotia, as a member of the Task Force on CPA, as a Regional Representative and in many other roles, Arthur Donahoe, was a central figure in the Canadian Region between 1981 and 1991. In 1993 he was named Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the first Canadian to hold this office.





The 25th Regional Conference, Québec, 1985

have two separate themes in two separate locations and to hold simultaneous sessions with rapporteurs. Workshop panels consisted of both parliamentarians and non parliamentary experts in order to provide different perspectives on the various topics.

The Conference opened with speeches by the Lieutenant Governor, Gilles Lamontagne and Speaker Richard Guay. Speaker Guay noted that conferences held for parliamentarians are very often unjustly viewed as pleasure trips. Yet parliamentary relations are part of what he called a member's continuing education.

Invited observers included Sir Michael Shaw and Alfred Morris from Great Britain, Jack Genia from Papua New Guinea, Speaker W. St. Clair Daniel from St. Lucia, Robert Moinet of the International Association of French Speaking Parliamentarians, John Bragg, Chairman of the National Conference of State Legislatures and Earl Mackay, Executive Director of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The first plenary session gave participants an opportunity to hear James McGrath, Chairman of the Special Committee on Reform of the House of Commons which tabled its report in June, 1985 and Michael Adams, President of Environics Research Group of Toronto, a firm which conducted survey research of how Canadians view their parliamentary institutions.

Workshop 1 was on the role of the private member with Lise Bourgault, MP and Professor Robert Jackson, of Carleton University.

Workshop 2 was on The Committee System with Richard French of the National Assembly, and Professor Graham White of the University of Toronto.

Workshop 3 featured Donald Cameron, Member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, and Jeffrey Simpson, columnist with the *Globe and Mail*, on the subject of Question Period.

Workshop 4 on the Confidence Convention consisted of Bob Rae, Leader of the New Democratic Party in Ontario, Philip Laundry, now Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons and Roland Michener.

Following the workshops delegates returned to the plenary session to hear reports from the Chairmen of each.

The second theme for the conference was inspired by discussions that would eventually lead to the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. To consider these issues delegates were transported from Québec City along the north shore to Manoir Richelieu in Pointe-au-Pic where they reconvened. This time the panels consisted of one American and one Canadian legislator.

- Sen. David Nething, North Dakota, and Ken Kowalski, Alberta on Economic Development;

- Rep. Jim Consta, California and Abe Kovnats, Manitoba on The Environment;
- Evelyn Bacon, Saskatchewan and Rep. John Bragg, Tennessee on Health Policy;
- Sen. Tarky J. Lombardi, New York and Bruce Strachan, British Columbia on the Arts.

Steven Blank, Director of the Institute for U.S.-Canada Business Relations at Pace University in New York gave a thought-provoking address in which he cautioned politicians not to become bogged down in short term analysis of costs and benefits of particular trade sectors.

In the workshops Québec MNA rapporteurs, Claude Dauphin, Marcel Lafrenière and Jean-Paul Champagne and Jean Poirier of Ontario reported on discussions that took place in their sessions.

It would be naive to suggest such discussion had any impact on the eventual negotiation of the Canada-US FTA but in terms of educating members and providing a forum for learning about the issues, they were very useful.

### **Presiding Officers' Conferences**

The Report the CPA Task Force recommended creation of another Regional activity:

The principle that the Speakers of the various Canadian legislatures should meet regularly to discuss matters of common concern was accepted unanimously. Such a meeting would enable the Speakers to study as a group certain problems that confront them and discuss possible solutions. It was also agreed that such conferences should be held every year. It is recommended that a Regional Speakers conference be held every year apart from the Regional Council Meeting.<sup>19</sup>

The First Conference was hosted by Alberta Speaker Gerald Amerongen in February 1984. Deputy Speakers and Clerks were invited as was the Canadian Regional representative, Keith Penner. The format established by Alberta has been followed more or less ever since. In keeping with the informal and frank nature of the discussion verbatim transcripts are not usually produced but there have been exceptions as in New Brunswick (1988) and Manitoba (2000).

The mid-winter timing has provided headaches for organizers and participants. For example the 1996 Conference in Whitehorse took place during a record-breaking cold spell with delegates treated to temperatures as low as minus 48° Celsius.

In Halifax in 2005 two huge snowstorms immediately before and during the Conference played havoc with travel plans. A snowstorm just before the 1994 Conference in Regina prevented many eastern Speakers from attending. The 2011 Conference in

Iqaluit's featured unseasonably warm weather until the sudden arrival of a fierce Baffin Island blizzard on the day of departure resulted in closure of the airport, forcing most delegates to spend an extra evening in Nunavut.

The week-end dates at the end of January or early February were chosen since most legislatures are normally adjourned thereby freeing the Presiding Officers to attend. There have been several discussions about changing the time but it has proven impossible to find one that does not conflict with other activities.

Although participation at the Conference is limited to those with a direct association with the speakership, occasionally the host jurisdiction will invite special guests such as in 2010 when Speaker Ted Staffen of Yukon invited the President of the Alaska State Senate and the Speaker of the Alaska State House of Representatives.

Former Speakers or Clerks are sometimes included. At the 1985 Conference in Vancouver former House of Commons Speaker James Jerome was invited to reflect upon his six years in the chair. The 1994 Conference featured a round table with three former Saskatchewan Speakers.

Topics covered at these conferences are designed to interest presiding officers and officials. For the first few years papers were presented by the Speakers, however, at the New Brunswick conference in 1988 several table officers also presented papers. The practice has developed of having officials prepare the papers and then opening discussion to the Speakers. It is unusual for outside individuals to address the Conference. But there have been exceptions.

In Manitoba (1987) Joe Maingot, former Law Clerk of the House of Commons and a member of the Law Reform Commission spoke on the question of parliamentary privileges and immunities. The same topic was the subject of a paper presented by Neil Finkelstein of Blake, Cassels & Graydon at the 2003 Conference in Ontario. David Docherty, Dean of Arts at Wilfrid Laurier University and author of a book on Legislatures spoke at the 2007 Conference in Prince Edward Island. The following year in Québec City Professor Louis Massicotte spoke to the Speakers about the newly created Research Chair on Democracy and Parliamentary Institutions at Laval University.

Andrew Imlach, Director of Communications and Research with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association addressed the Speakers in 2009 on his 30 years with the CPA. The German based Partnerships of Parliaments has a special relationship with the Presiding Officers. The Executive Director of the Partnership, Alfons Schöps, is sometimes invited to speak.





The 25th Presiding Officers' Conference, Québec, 2008

There is some repetition in the choice of topics but there are usually a number of new Speakers in attendance. At the 2012 conference nine of the Speakers had been in the Chair for less than a year. At most Conferences one session is set aside for a round table discussion on recent procedural and administrative developments in each jurisdiction. Every Speaker or Deputy Speaker is given an opportunity to outline important rulings or other matters.

In 1998 British Columbia strayed from the usual format of the conference by organizing an Oxford Style debate among the Speakers. Speaker Dale Lovick of British Columbia chaired a debate on the following motion:

Be it resolved that parliamentary reform is the sole prerogative of the government in consultation with opposition parties (and initiatives for reform are not the domain of Speakers or Officers of the House).

Occasionally the Conference has been an opportunity to discuss matters relating to CPA in general. For example in January 1992, Claude DesRosiers, Clerk of the Ontario Legislature, presented a paper on "CPA: the Green Paper and the Harare Declaration; Towards a Canadian Region Position". The DesRosiers' paper called for a re-dedication by the Canadian Branches

of the essential purpose of CPA, to provide more and better opportunities for legislators to get together for meaningful discussions and exchanges of opinion, on a Canadian level as well as at the international Commonwealth level. This was the subject of a working party meeting in Kuala Lumpur in March of that year and was discussed further at the CPA International Executive meeting.

The social programme for the presiding officers is often limited to a welcoming reception and dinner offered by the host Speaker. Sometimes the social programme is expanded to give visiting Speakers an opportunity to see aspects of the host jurisdiction. This is particularly true when the Conference takes place in the smaller provinces or the northern territories. The 2006 conference in Yellowknife began with an excursion to the Diavik Diamond Mine some 300 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife.

In Nunavut in 2011 delegates had an opportunity to sample local foods, including Arctic char, caribou, polar bear and musk ox. There were traditional performances from Inuit artists and a fashion show highlighting modern designs of sealskin clothing. They visited such Iqaluit landmarks as the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum.



One of the unique social events was arranged by Speaker Michel Bissonnet at the 2008 Conference in Québec City. He arranged dinner at a restaurant overlooking the Red Bull Crashed Ice competition that was taking place in Québec City that week-end. The Speakers could watch skaters from several countries hurling themselves at speeds up to 50 km/hr down a specially constructed ice course in quest of a \$5,000 prize.

The Ottawa Conference in 1999 included a joint dinner with the Standing Committee of the Commonwealth Presiding Officers who were in Canada for a meeting to set the agenda for their Conference in Australia in 2000.

Normally the Canadian Speakers would not meet again in Ottawa for ten or twelve years but the 2004 Conference in Ottawa, was timed to precede the 17th Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference. Following adjournment of the Canadian Conference all the Presiding Officers were transported to Montebello for the Commonwealth meeting attended by more than 100 Presiding Officers and parliamentary officials from thirty-four Commonwealth countries.

#### **A Decade of Retrenchment 1995-2005**

The 1990s was a time of transition in Canadian politics and in the Canadian Region. Some provinces reduced the number of members in their legislatures thus reducing their contribution to CPA and the potential number of attendees at conferences and seminars.

In the 1993 federal election the Progressive Conservative Party was reduced to two seats and the New Democratic Party to nine. Both lost their status as official parties and therefore the right to send delegates to inter-parliamentary meetings. Two new parties emerged. The Bloc Québécois had 54 members, all from the province of Québec. Their Leader, Lucien Bouchard, became Leader of the Opposition. The Reform Party won 52 seats, all of them in Western Canada. They promised new way of doing politics and were highly sceptical of involvement in inter-parliamentary activities. More than two-thirds of the 295 members of the House of Commons were newly elected in 1993.

There were also significant changes at the staff level. Ian Imrie retired in 1994 after organizing his fourth international CPA conference. To replace him the Region turned to the Clerk of the Senate, Paul Bélisle. As the Clerk had a very heavy workload there was an understanding that he would be assisted by the new Secretary to the federal branch, Mary MacDougall. This relationship has continued with her successors Maija Adamson, Carole Chafe, Stephanie Bond and Elizabeth Kingston. When Paul Bélisle retired in 2010 he was replaced as Secretary Treasurer by Blair Armitage of the Senate.

Philip Laundry also retired in the mid-90s but no single individual emerged from either the Library of Parliament



The Canadian Regional Council meets annually and is the governing body of the CPA Region

or the staff of the House of Commons, to replace the special role he had played with the Canadian Region. Gordon Barnhart, who had replaced Henry Muggah as Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* resigned as Clerk of the Senate and Chair of the Board in 1994. He was succeeded as Chair by Claude DesRosiers, and later by Lori Catalli-Sonier, Clerk of the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly.

Budgetary cutbacks in the mid 1990s had an impact on CPA activities. No seminar was held in 1993, 1997 or 2004. The advent of a federal branch seminar in 2001 impacted the Regional Seminar. This program, held around the same time as the Regional seminar, brings together two representatives from each of the international regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and two Canadian provincial branches.

Six provinces and one territory (Nunavut) as well as the federal branch did host a Regional Seminar between 1993 and 2004 but unlike earlier seminars these were held on a week end with fewer members and fewer sessions. The majority of sessions (31/40) consisted of a single presentation rather than a panel. Outside experts were few and far between. Fewer international legislators were invited. The federal branch no longer provided the majority of presenters with Alberta and Québec picking up the slack. Perhaps the greatest change was in the nature of the topics. The majority still dealt with procedural issues but many dealt with public policy issues such as gambling, national transportation, forestry policy or the economy.

When Québec hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Seminar in 2002 it did not follow the downsizing trend. In fact, it went in the opposite direction combining with the Association of Former Members of Québec to put on an extremely ambitious event.

This seminar brought together more than 200 persons from France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Mexico, the United States and Canada. Participants included not only parliamentarians and former parliamentarians but also representatives of international associations, experts and a cross section

of people interested in parliamentary institutions  
Topics included:

- The Roots of the Malaise afflicting our Democracy
- Is Parliament's Decline Irreversible?
- Could or Should Party Line and Proponents of a Single Issue Be Kept at Bay?"
- Should Ministerial Responsibility be Limited
- Can Parliament Be Re-invented?
- The Age of the Internet: The Resurrection of the Citizen?

Speakers included politicians, such as Nathalie Rochefort and Matthias Rioux from the Québec National Assembly and Senator Jean-Claude Rivest and Caroline St. Hilaire, from Ottawa, former Québec members and ministers including: Jacques Brassard, Jean Garon, Victor Goldbloom, Richard Guay and Claude Ryan.



At the 25th CPA Seminar in 2002 many non parliamentarians were invited including (1-r): Denis Marshall, Secretary General of CPA, Prachi Shah, Collège Champlain, Alan Rosenthal, Rutgers University, and Louis Balthazar, Laval University

Other non parliamentary panellists included: Serge Cantin (University du Québec à Trois Rivières), Bernard Cassen (Director General of Le Monde diplomatique) Jacques Dufresne (Author), Gilles Lesage (Journalist), Olivier Giscard d'Estaing (President of the Committee for a World Parliament), and Philippe Séguin (Former President of the French National Assembly).

Another unique aspect to the seminar was financial support received from companies including Alcan, RBC





In 1999 Québec hosted the 38<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference. In addition to Canadian delegates there were Special Observers from Great Britain and Malaysia as well as the International President of CPA, Hector McLean of Trinidad and Tobago, the Secretary General and the CPA Regional Representative from the Caribbean Region.

Financial Group, Industrielle Alliance, Hydro Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the Société des alcools du Québec, Loto-Québec and the Commission de la capitale nationale du Québec.

Regional conferences continued to be held annually between 1995 and 2005. One concession to austerity was introduction of a fee for delegates, accompanying persons and observers, usually two or three hundred dollars per person. This defrayed some of the host's expenses. British and Caribbean legislators continued to be the most frequent guests with an occasional American legislator and a few Commonwealth members from further abroad such as the Isle of Man (1995), New South Wales (1996), Belize (1999) and Malaysia (1999).

The advent of Presiding Officers' conferences in January had made June Council meetings unnecessary and Council was rescheduled to take place during the summer conference. The task of planning the conference agenda, with the retirement of Imrie and Laundry, was turned over to a committee of Clerks at the Table who worked with the host.

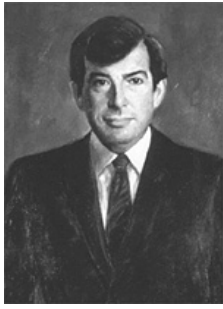
A highlight of this period was the 2000 conference in Prince Edward Island opened by His Royal Highness

Prince Edward. The Prince reminded delegates of the many opportunities they have to assist legislators elsewhere to learn how a parliamentary system works. He cautioned them to remember that the Westminster form of government is not the only kind of democratic government and they should always be open to learning from others.

An unusual event took place in 1999 when Speaker Bill Hartley of British Columbia proposed a resolution about human rights violations in Burma similar to one he introduced in the British Columbia legislature. The CPA does not normally vote on resolutions but it was agreed that a letter would be circulated to all delegates for their signature and then forwarded to Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy.

The Saskatchewan conference (1997) was unique in that for the first time proceedings were televised live across the province on the provincial cable network and rebroadcast nationally on CPAC. They also arranged a self development session with an industrial psychologist who had delegates fill in a Myers-Briggs questionnaire designed to test their personalities and see if there was a quintessential political temperament? In practical terms





**Speaker Richard Guay**  
Regional Rep. 1984-85  
Chair, 1985 Conference



**Speaker Pierre Lorrain**  
Regional Rep. 1986-87  
Chair, 1987 Conference on the  
Parliamentary Tradition



**Speaker Jean Pierre Saintonge**  
Chair, 1992 Seminar  
Chair, 1993 Presiding Officers'  
Conference



**Speaker Jean-Pierre  
Charbonneau**  
Chair, 1999 Conference



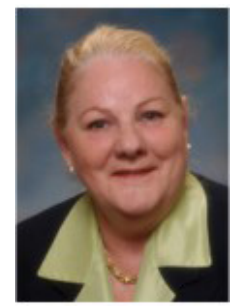
**Speaker Louise Harel**  
Chair, 2002 Seminar



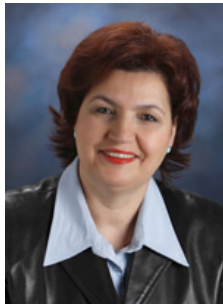
**Roger Paquin**  
Regional Rep. 2001-03



**Speaker Michel Bissonnet**  
Regional Rep. 2003-04  
Chair, 2008 Presiding Officers'  
Conference



**Charlotte L'Écuyer**  
Chair, Commonwealth Women  
Parliamentarians  
2006-08



**Fatima Houda-Pepin**  
Regional Rep. 2011-12

## Québec Parliamentarians and the Canadian Region of CPA, 1983-2012



**Speaker Jacques Chagnon**  
Chair, 2012 Conference

this information could help members improve their communication skills and to understand others.

An aboriginal theme was added to the Saskatchewan conference with an Ecumenical Aboriginal Service that included prayers, readings and a "Water Ceremony." Representatives from each province had been asked to bring small samples of their local water. One by one they poured the water into a large clear bowl. Samples of the combined water were given to delegates. The remainder was returned to earth in a ceremony outside the legislative building. During the opening ceremonies Elder Donald Bigknife of the Piapot Reserve offered a prayer for the conference. During a visit to the Qu'Appelle Valley delegates experienced an evening of First Nations Cultural Performances from the Cree, Ojibwa/Pawnee and Hidatsa/Arikara Nations.

Business session focused on aboriginal issues as well including one on "Negotiations on Self-government Arrangements with First Nations" with presentations by Roy Erasmus of the Northwest Territories) and Eber Hampton, President of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. Another on Aboriginal Self Government featured Elijah Harper, MP, James Downey, Deputy Premier of Manitoba and Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

The tours and social events during these years introduced some innovative ideas. Nova Scotia offered a cruise on the Bluenose. Saskatchewan took everyone to a demonstration of precision flying by the "Snowbirds" at their base near Moose Jaw. Ontario sponsored an evening at Skydome to watch a Blue Jays baseball game. In British Columbia there was a tour on HMCS Vancouver with an opportunity to observe a man overboard exercise and a helicopter rescue at sea.

New Brunswick took everyone to Bouctouche (*Pays de la Sagouine*) for an afternoon of Acadian theatre including a performance by Senator Viola Léger an actress who had been bringing *La Sagouine* to life for 30 years. The creator of *La Sagouine*, renowned novelist and playwright Antonine Maillet, joined the delegates at a traditional lobster supper following the performance.

Newfoundland and Labrador provided a personal touch with a home-made buffet dinner provided by ladies of the Lion's Club of Bay Roberts. It was followed by a performance of "Life on the Water" where local musicians presented their own songs about the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador

In terms of format the Oxford Union style debate fell out of favour (none were held during this period) and there was a trend toward fewer panels and more topics with a single lead speaker.

CPA Regional Conference 1995-2004			
Conferences	Business Sessions	Panels (more than 1 Speaker)	Women presenters
1995 Nova Scotia	6	6	1
1996 Manitoba	8	6	2
1997 Saskatchewan	7	6	4
1998 Ontario	8	3	4
1999 Québec	8	1	5
2000 Prince Edward Island	9	0	2
2001 Alberta	8	3	4
2002 New Brunswick	8	3	3
2003 British Columbia	7	6	8
Total	69	33	33

There was a slight reduction in the number of outside experts compared to the previous decade. Among those who were invited to participate:

- Scott Edmonds of *Canadian Press* (1996) and Professor Trevor Anderson of the University of Manitoba (1996) on the role of the press
- Jim Girling, Legal Counsel for the Cabinet Office in Ontario (1998) on the use of referenda.
- Doug Miller, President of Environics International Limited (1998) on environmental issues.
- Roger Gibbins, President of the Canada West Foundation (2001) on the Impact of Globalization of Canadian Federalism.
- Marc Henry, Vice-President of IPSOS/Reid (2001) on the impact of Demographics on Services and Voting Trends.
- Jeannie Lea, Institute of Island Studies (2002) on proportional representation
- Norman Ruff, University of Victoria and Ian McKinnon, former President of Decima Research. (2003) on Polling on the Public Policy Process
- Les Leyne, *Victoria Colonist* and Mike Smyth, *Vancouver Province* (2003) on the role of the Fourth Estate
- Gordon Gibson, Fraser Institute, Nick Loenen, Fair Voting BC, Ronald Cheffins, University of Victoria (2003 on the BC Citizens' Assembly
- Dr. Charlyn Black, Co-Director, of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation.(2003) on health care policy

## The Canadian Region Since 2005

The most significant recent development has been establishment of a Canadian Section of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) which has become the most dynamic part of the Canadian Region.



Creation of a women's group within the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association can be traced to an informal meeting of women held at the 35th Commonwealth Parliamentary in Barbados in 1989.

In 2004 the CWP became an officially funded body within the CPA. Its Chair, Lindiwe Maseko of the South African province of Gauteng took a seat on the International Executive Committee. Around the same time two MPs, Sue Barnes and Sarmite Bulte began to raise the issue of adding a CWP component to the Canadian Region. A discussion with the Regional Council in 2004 bogged down on issues of structure and cost. Speaker Harvey Hodder of Newfoundland suggested that women interested in forming a group meet in conjunction with the 2005 Regional conference in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Sixteen female parliamentarians from seven Branches attended the meeting which took place immediately before the CPA Regional Conference. The morning was spent discussing a document entitled *"Gender Sensitizing Commonwealth Parliaments – Report of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group"*. In the afternoon delegates turned their attention toward the creation of a Canadian Section and its integration with the Canadian Region.

The aims and objectives of the CWP would be to provide opportunities for strategic discussion and

development for future and present parliamentarians; to increase female representation in Parliament; to foster closer relationships between women parliamentarians in all Branches of the Region; to foster relations with other countries having close parliamentary ties with the Region; and to discuss, strategize and act on gender-related issues in Canada and internationally.

To achieve these goals several recommendations were presented to Regional Council meeting the next day. The key changes were as follows:

- That each annual CPA regional conference include, prior to the start of the conference, one day for the CWP-Canada to meet; that a report of that day's work be presented to the plenary conference for its consideration and that at least one gender issue be selected as one of the topics for the full conference.
- That a proposed work plan and annual budget be submitted as soon as practicable by the CWP-Canada to the Regional Council for consideration and adoption.

When Regional Council met to consider the recommendations there was considerable discussion about how the position of Chair would be filled and specifically whether there would be alternation as used for many other CPA functions. Council postponed a decision to a subsequent meeting held two days later. Finally it was agreed that the women would elect their Chair rather than follow a fixed schedule of rotation. Two persons were nominated to be head of the CWP



Since the establishment of the CWP women have played a greater role in activities of the Canadian Region. At the 2006 Conference in Ottawa Sue Barnes MP, Charlotte L'Écuyer (Qc), Judy Junor (Sk), Olive Crane (PE) and Pat Duncan (YK) discussed the Challenges of Women in Canadian Politics: Responsibilities of Political Parties, Legislators and the Public.

and in a secret ballot Sarmite Bulte MP defeated Charlotte L'Écuyer of Québec for the three year term.

When Mme Bulte lost her seat in the 2006 federal election Mme L'Écuyer became Canadian Representative for the remainder of the term. She was succeeded by Maria Minna in 2008 and Myrna Dreidger of Manitoba in 2011.

The second meeting of the CWP was held in Ottawa on July 8, 2006. It has continued to meet as part of every subsequent CPA Conferences. The usual pattern is to start with a CWP Steering Committee breakfast and meeting. This Committee consists of one female legislator from each jurisdiction. It plans the work for the coming year. Members are normally part of the provincial delegation to the Regional Conference. The rest of the day is devoted to three or four business sessions which are open to all delegates male and female.

From the outset the CWP was determined to do more than meet once a year. They would take the show on the road to meet female legislators and potential future legislators. To achieve this end they established an Outreach Program which consists of four or five female parliamentarians travelling to various parts of the country to meet with members of various institutions and organizations as well as local politicians and youth groups. Among other things the delegation discusses the political landscape in Canada and internationally, the political situation in the local jurisdiction, the barriers that exist for women who wish to enter politics and the importance of engagement in politics and public service as well as, the role and objectives of the CWP-Canada Region.<sup>20</sup>

To co-ordinate the meetings and the outreach program the CWP has its own Secretary provided by the House of Commons. She provides support services for the group



From 1995-2010 Paul Bélisle was Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Region

including extensive consultation necessary to identify key community organizations, leaders and potential candidates in each region. The original secretary for the CWP was Stephanie Bond who has been succeeded by Julie Pelletier and Jolène Savoie.

The first outreach programme took place in the Northwest Territories in 2007. Subsequent programmes have been held in Halifax, Iqaluit, Vancouver and Charlottetown. The focus of the Outreach Program depends on the needs of the local area.

In Vancouver the program included a day at a campaign school organized by the Canadian Women Voters Congress, a non-partisan, grassroots charitable organization, dedicated to encouraging all Canadian women to become strong, effective voices at all levels of government. The School brought together 30 women who were planning to run for office or assist in campaigns in upcoming municipal elections. The program included presentations from Adriane Carr, Co-Founder and Former Green Party Leader of British Columbia; Pam Goldsmith-Jones, Mayor of West Vancouver, Kristy Warwyk, campaign consultant; Andrea Reimer, Vancouver City Councillor and Stephen Irving, Social Media expert.

In Charlottetown the members spoke to about 100 grade 10-12 students. They met with the PEI Coalition for Women in Government who ran a two day leadership school. They also met with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Aboriginal Women's Association and former female participants of the PEI Rotary Youth Parliament.

After only five years the CWP has provided a case study on the effective use of an inter-parliamentary association. Women have established a clear goal – the need to elect a critical mass of women in order to make an impact on legislatures. They established a strategy and means to obtain this goal. They work together, despite partisan differences, for the furtherance of the goal.

### Regional Conferences and Seminars since 2005

Since the establishment of the CWP women have played a larger role in the CPA. Conference agendas now include at least one topic relating to the role of women in politics and the number of women presenters is generally quite high.

Among the outside experts invited to recent conferences were:

- Professor David Docherty, Sir Wilfrid Laurier University (2007) on his ongoing research project on Members of Parliament Who Cross the Floor.
- Dr. Kim Peers, University of Manitoba (2007) with a panel of university students on Youth Voter and Political Apathy



- Professor Lori Turnbull, Dalhousie University (2008), on The Nova Scotia House of Assembly
- Terry Fallis, Winner of the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour (2009) on his book The Best Laid Plans.
- Professor Emeritus David Smith, University of Saskatchewan (2010) on Re-examination of the Canadian Constitution
- Preston Manning, the Manning Centre for Building Democracy (2011) on a model parliament for Canada.
- Peter Milliken, former Speaker of the House (2011) on reflections about presiding over a minority parliament.

The trend toward fewer panels and more topics presented by a single individual has continued as shown in the following table.

CPA Regional Conferences 2005-2011			
Conference	Business Sessions	Panels (more than one speaker)	Women presenters
2005 Newfoundland and Labrador	8	1	3
2006 Ottawa	8	3	7
2007 Manitoba	8	1	4
2008 Nova Scotia	8	1	2
2009 Ontario	8	1	4
2010 Saskatchewan	6	0	2
2011 Prince Edward Island	8	1	3
Total	54	8	25

Regional seminars since 2005 have continued trends identified earlier. The fact that two of the seven seminars were held in the north is a positive development for nation building but likely resulted in reduced participation because of the distance and cost involved to most southern legislatures. Only twenty legislators from eight provinces and territories attended the 2007 seminar in Yukon which was originally scheduled for the NWT and switched on fairly short notice due to elections. The number was approximately the same in New Brunswick in 2011 when several provinces were in the midst of elections.

Frequent elections and minority parliaments tended to reduce federal participation. There has not been a single presentation by a federal legislator at the last six seminars. The majority of presentations have come from Alberta, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Ontario.

Like the conferences more and more topics are presented by a single speaker and many times these reflect individual interests and have little to do with the original idea of the seminar as a vehicle for the

professional development of legislators. Examples of policy issues included at recent seminars include:

- Water Stewardship in Manitoba (2005)
- The Government as Foster Parent (2006)
- Disability Issues, Presenting Challenges to the Provinces (2007)
- The Urban Rural Disconnect (2008)
- Rural Development initiatives in Prince Edward Island (2008)
- Nurse Recruitment and Retention (2008)
- The Alberta Oil Sands (2010)
- Climate Change (2010)

Legislators do have a wide variety of interests and constituents expect them to be knowledgeable on all sorts of issues. However with attendance falling, enthusiasm for learning the nuts and bolts of parliamentary government on the wane, the prospect of multiple fixed date elections every fourth October and continued overlap with the federal branch seminar it may well be time to rethink the role and timing of a regional seminar.

## Conclusion

In one sense a lot has changed since it was decided to create an association to allow legislators to become more familiar with other sections of the country and to meet fellow members. Travel is much easier and most people, by the time they have been elected, have had the opportunity to travel widely. Information about what is happening in different legislatures is now available from every desktop. So it is logical to ask if, after five decades, the Canadian Region of CPA still performs a useful function.



Networking has always been a feature of CPA Regional meetings. Future Québec Premier Jean Charest with Deputy Clerk of Yukon, Missy Follwell, in 1999

As shown in this paper the annual conference has evolved and several new annual activities have been added. Taken together these can be seen as part of a process whereby leaders and future leaders get to know each other better and, presumably, work together to resolve public policy issues. There has also been a conscious attempt to involve outside groups such as aboriginals in both the business sessions and the social program.

The educational function remains important, although difficult to quantify. Relationships established during various activities often lead to informal exchanges long after the event. In terms of information, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* is now widely considered as "the leading Canadian journal on parliamentary practice."<sup>21</sup>

Female legislators in particular have recognized the usefulness of the Association as a vehicle to promote a shared objective and have worked with some success toward this end.

A fiftieth anniversary is also a time to think ahead. Perhaps some activities could be improved by changing the format or timing? Should opportunities be explored for more joint projects with many of the other institutions now devoted to the study of Parliamentary institutions? Laval University, Carleton, Queen's, Montreal, and the University of British Columbia have Chairs or Institutes focusing on democracy or parliament. Many think tanks devote part of their time to looking at institutional issues. Perhaps it is time to look at possible partnership projects with these bodies? Could more activities be organized in collaboration with the private sector? Proposals have been put forth recently for the training of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.<sup>22</sup> Should the Region seek to assist those engaged in these efforts?

The Québec Branch has been in the forefront of trying new approaches to interparliamentary relations. It is coincidental that a province whose motto is *Je me souviens* (I remember), has been host for the 25th CPA Regional Conference, the 25th Canadian Regional Seminar, the 25th Presiding Officers Conference and now the 50th Regional Conference. But it is no coincidence that Québec has been most successful at using interparliamentary relations to promote Québec's presence in the federation and indeed on the world stage. Québec's interparliamentary relations now extend beyond the Commonwealth to La Francophonie, the federal and federated states of central and south American and various American state governments and legislatures. While other ties have become important those who attend the 50th CPA conference will find Québec continues to give high priority to its CPA relationship.

## Notes

- 1 Ian Imrie, The Canadian Region of CPA: A Personal Memoir, *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1998, p. 6.
- 2 *Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Area Conference*, Halifax, 1958, p. 102.
- 3 *Ibid.* p. 104
- 4 *Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Area Conference*, Winnipeg, 1960, p. 27.
- 5 *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Regional Conference*, British Columbia, 1968, pp. 27-28.
- 6 *Ibid.* pp. 30-31.
- 7 *Ibid.* p. 26
- 8 *Ibid.* pp. 27-35.
- 9 *Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference*, Ontario, 1974, p. 7.
- 10 See *Le Parlementarisme britannique: Anachronisme ou réalité modern?* Conference on the British Parliamentary System, Documents et Débats, Québec, 1980.
- 11 Christian Comeau, "The Québec City Conference on the Parliamentary System", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1979.
- 12 *Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Canadian Regional Conference*, Winnipeg, 1972, p. 36.
- 13 *Report of the Task Force appointed by the Canadian Regional Council of the CPA*, Ottawa, June 1983, p. 16.
- 14 Under this proposal Ontario, Québec, Alberta and British Columbia would pay 6% each, the Yukon 2% and the other provinces and territories in between.
- 15 For more information see "Making the Case in Washington," *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1985, p. 38.
- 16 Gary Levy and Graham White, *Provincial and Territorial Legislatures in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 245.
- 17 The format had actually been used for the first time in the 1982 seminar in Ottawa chaired by David Collenette. The topic was "Be it resolved that parliamentary and legislative institutions in Canada no longer perform the functions for which they were created."
- 18 *The International Symposium on Democracy*, Québec, September 8-13, 1992.
- 19 *Report of the Task Force Appointed by the Canadian Regional Council of the CPA*, Ottawa, June 4, 1983, p.18.
- 20 See Charlotte L'Écuyer, "The First Outreach Program of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol 30, no. 3, Autumn 2007.
- 21 Thomas S. Axworthy, *Everything Old is New Again: Observations on Parliamentary Reform*, The Centre for the Study of Democracy, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, April 2008, note 1.
- 22 Preston Manning, "A Model Parliament for Canada", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 34, no. 4, winter 2011.