

The Canadian Scene

Commonwealth Youth Parliament

From November 6 to 10, 2016, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia hosted the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament, the first time that this event has been held in Canada.

The Commonwealth Youth Parliament is an exciting annual program created to support young people in their development as potential future parliamentarians. Opportunities are provided for participants to learn about the fundamentals of parliamentary democracy, network with other young leaders, and apply their talents and experience in a parliamentary setting.

Fifty-two youth, aged 18 to 29, from 22 countries, and representing seven Commonwealth Parliamentary Association regions attended. Eleven Canadian

delegates represented eight Canadian CPA branches. They were: **Andriy Krugliak** and **Avery Roberge-Eadie** (Alberta); **Zoé Duhaime**, **Sheridan Hawes** and **Sky Losier** (British Columbia); **Mackenzie Taylor** (New Brunswick); **Josh Tordiff** (Northwest Territories); **Sheldon Paul** (Ontario); **Connor Mycroft** (Prince Edward Island); **Gabriel Laurence-Brook** (Quebec); and **Stefanie Panesar** (House of Commons).

Six Commonwealth parliamentarians served as Mentors to the Youth Parliamentarians, including: **Spencer Chandra Herbert**, MLA, and **Jodie Wickens**, MLA, from the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia; **Jessica Littlewood**, MLA, Legislative Assembly of Alberta; **Kate Forbes**, MSP, Scottish Parliament; **Adam Marshall**, MP, New South Wales Legislative Assembly; and **Chathura Sandeepa Senaratne**, MP, Parliament of Sri Lanka.

Parliamentary Committees Office



The official photo for the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament hosted by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.



Oliver Nacey, Minister of Health of the Youth Parliament, responds to the Opposition during a lively question period in the Chamber.



Youth Parliamentarian Abbas Sanni consults with Davey Haughton, Opposition Whip of the Youth Parliament, during a caucus meeting session held in the Hemlock Room at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.



British Columbia Speaker Linda Reid presides over House Proceedings in the Chamber. Seated before her from left to right are Allison Lloyd, Clerk of Committees from the Yukon Legislative Assembly, Kate Ryan-Lloyd, Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees, and Susan Sourial, Clerk Assistant—Committees and Interparliamentary Relations.

Each Mentor was assigned to either the government or opposition to provide support and guidance. The Youth Parliamentarians appreciated the “wisdom and counsel” of the Mentors, noting that they were “fantastic” and “inspirational.” In addition to coaching the Youth Parliamentarians, the Mentors also participated on panel discussions, sharing their personal experiences on topics such as the role of a Member of Parliament; Question Period; the media; and campaign planning and the electoral process.

During House Proceedings, Youth Parliamentarians delivered statements introducing themselves and their home jurisdictions, and spoke about issues and events at the forefront of their minds. During heated and passionate Question Periods, the Opposition raised issues including health care, the environment, advanced education, relationships with indigenous peoples, and foreign affairs. The Youth Parliamentarians also introduced various Bills, and debated, proposed amendments to, and passed the *Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act*.

A unique feature of this Commonwealth Youth Parliament was the representation of women in leadership roles. For the first time since this became an annual CPA program in 2012, both the Premier and Opposition Leader were women.

In her closing remarks, one Youth Parliamentarian, **Rea Vanterpool** from the British Virgin Islands, had this message for her fellow Youth Parliamentarians:

As I listened to the issues raised by fellow youth parliamentarians, from human rights violations to the neglect of aging populations, I was reminded of how different our life experiences are. Our diversity shows up not only in our parents or our culture but also through issues facing our jurisdictions. It is apparent in our personalities, our interests, our abilities and our weaknesses. When we truly celebrate all the ways that we are different, we can more fully appreciate how partnerships can bring about change.

The 9th Annual Commonwealth Youth Parliament will be hosted by the British Virgin Islands House of Assembly in 2017.



Above: Ashvini Savanthrapadian, Premier of the Youth Parliament, speaks to reporters (and Mentors acting as reporters) during a mock press conference session in the Members' Lobby at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Below: Youth Parliamentarians and Mentors at the closing dinner at Government House where they were met by Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon.



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*As of December 31 2016

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