

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

**CPA POST-ELECTION SEMINAR:
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
BELIZE REPORT**

3, 5 AND 7 MAY 2021



About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

About the authors

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Acknowledgements

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PROGRAMME IMPACT, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

IMPACT

In line with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's strategic objectives, new and returning elected Parliamentarians from the National Assembly of Belize will have improved knowledge and skills to undertake their parliamentary duties.

OUTCOMES

Outcome 1: New and returning Parliamentarians will have an in-depth understanding of parliamentary practice and procedure and the skills to legislate, scrutinise, provide oversight, and represent their communities to the highest standard.

Outcome 2: Members and Senators of the National Assembly of Belize and other Commonwealth Parliamentarians and officials will have an understanding of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and relevant networks; including its, purpose, values and opportunities.

Outcome 3: Parliamentarians will be able to identify examples and adopt good practices to better help them maintain a high standard of delivering their parliamentary responsibilities.

OUTPUTS

Output 1: The majority of Members and Senators of the National Assembly of Belize will have attended a Post-Election Seminar.

Output 2: A comprehensive outcome report will be produced and disseminated to the target beneficiaries.

Output 3: A set of video materials will be produced for future training of Commonwealth Parliamentarians.

Programme Overview

On 3, 5 and 7 May 2021, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat in collaboration with the National Assembly of Belize delivered a three-day induction programme for new and returning Members and Senators of the Parliament. The CPA Post-Election Seminar was delivered online using Zoom video communication software.

The programme saw the contribution of highly experienced and knowledgeable Presiding Officers, Parliamentarians, Clerks and expert speakers from across the globe.

Throughout the three-day programme, Parliamentarians participated in a wide range of sessions that not only focused on enhancing their knowledge and expertise on matters relating to parliamentary practice, but also provided them with skills to strengthen their democratic responsibilities in the new parliamentary term.

The Seminar was opened by the Hon. Valerie Woods MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, President of the Senate and Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

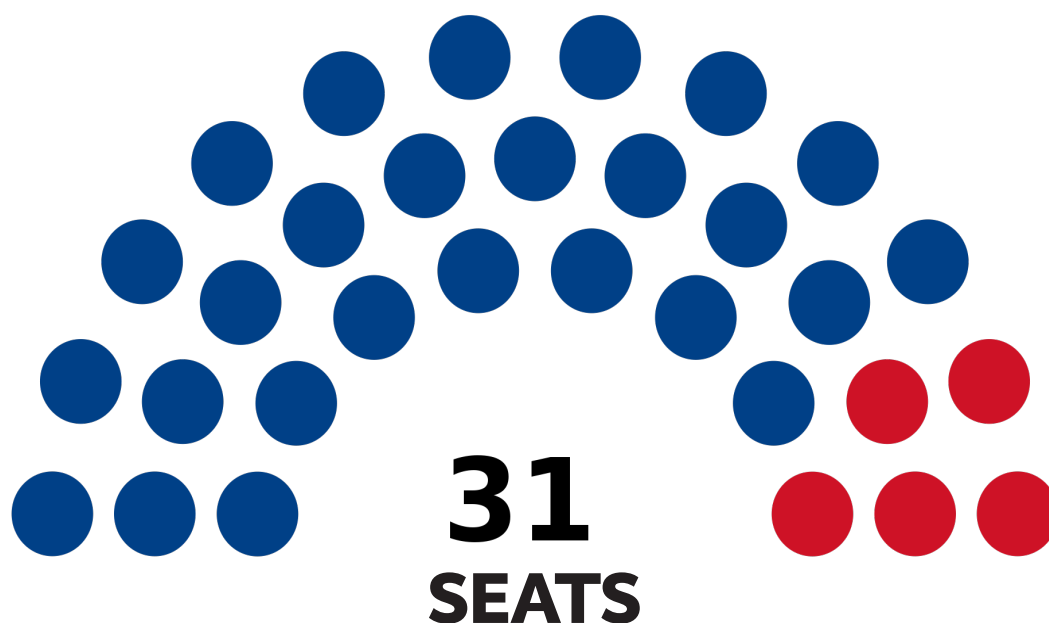


Programme Background

The virtual seminar was delivered following the Belize General Election held on 11 November 2020.

The People's United Party (PUP) achieved its first national election victory since 2003. The PUP won 26 seats and the incumbent United Democratic Party won the remaining 5 seats. In spite of the global COVID-19 outbreak and weather disturbances, the election turnout was the highest in Belize since 1998 at over 81%. The first female party leader and Prime Ministerial candidate in Belizean general election history, Nancy Marin MP was elected leader of the Belize People's Front. In December 2020, Hon. Valerie Woods MP was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

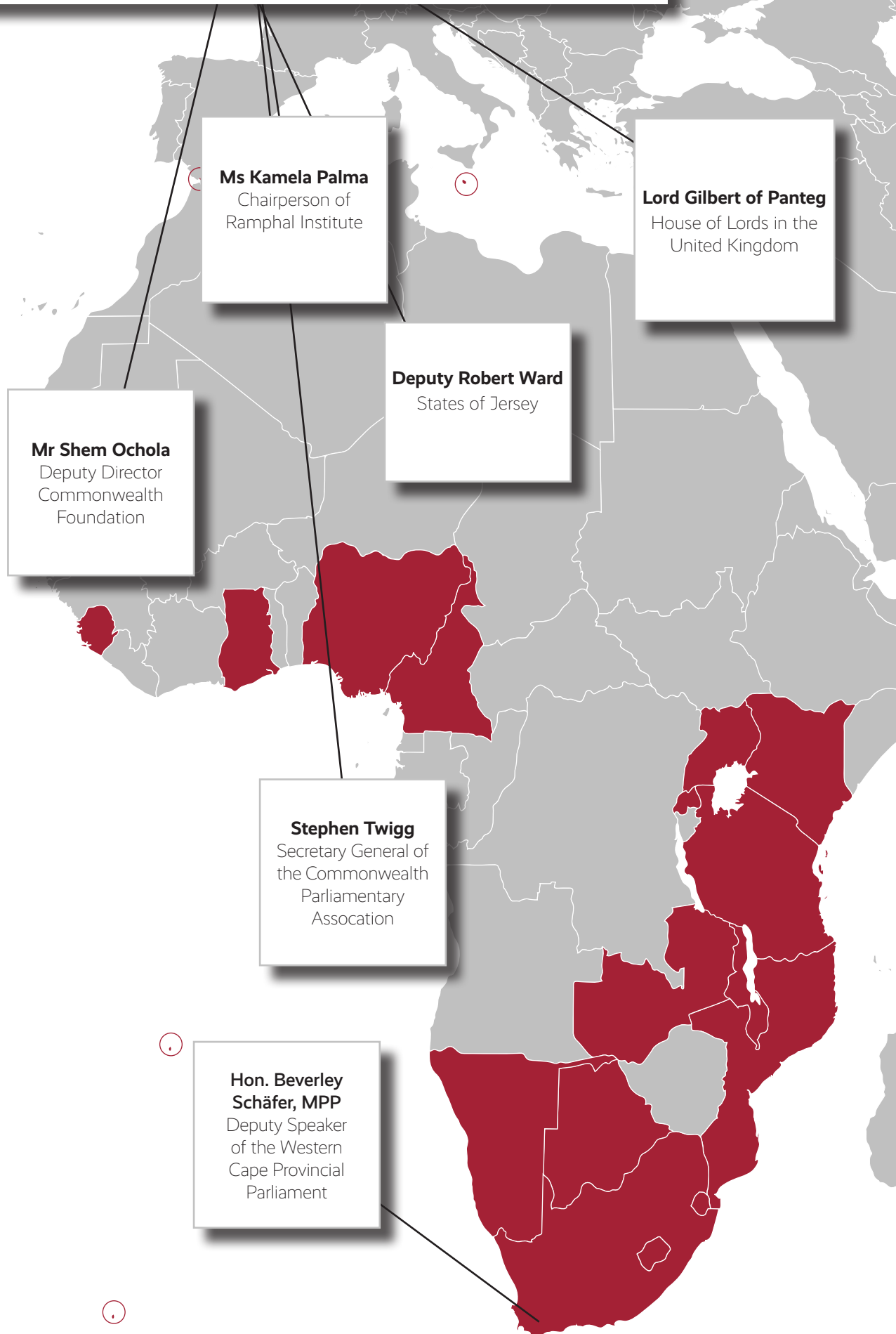
The Senate is currently comprised of thirteen appointed Members. The thirteen Senators are appointed by the Governor General; six appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister; three on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition; one on the advice of the Belize Chamber of Commerce and the Belize Business Bureau; one on the advice of the Belize Council of Churches and the Evangelical Association of Churches; one on the advice of the Belize National Trade Union Congress and the Civil Society Steering Committee; and one on the advice of the Non Governmental Organisations. The President of the Senate is either elected from among the appointed Members or from outside of the Senate.



 People's United Party

 United Democratic Party

External Seminar Speakers



Ms Kamela Palma
Chairperson of
Ramphal Institute

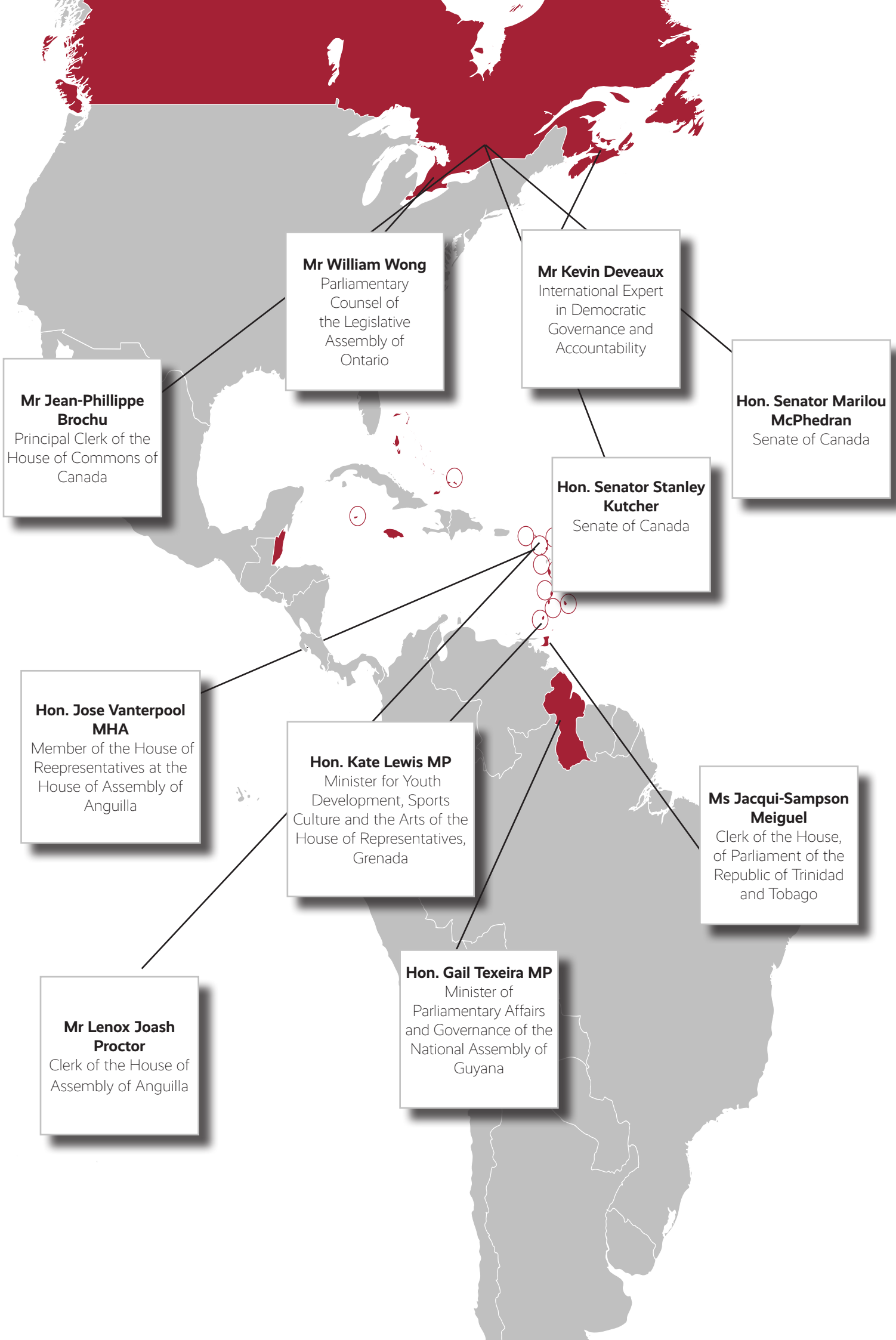
Lord Gilbert of Panteg
House of Lords in the
United Kingdom

Deputy Robert Ward
States of Jersey

Mr Shem Ochola
Deputy Director
Commonwealth
Foundation

Stephen Twigg
Secretary General of
the Commonwealth
Parliamentary
Association

**Hon. Beverley
Schäfer, MPP**
Deputy Speaker
of the Western
Cape Provincial
Parliament



Mr Jean-Phillippe Brochu
Principal Clerk of the House of Commons of Canada

Mr William Wong
Parliamentary Counsel of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Mr Kevin Deveaux
International Expert in Democratic Governance and Accountability

Hon. Senator Marilou McPhedran
Senate of Canada

Hon. Senator Stanley Kutcher
Senate of Canada

Hon. Jose Vanterpool MHA
Member of the House of Representatives at the House of Assembly of Anguilla

Hon. Kate Lewis MP
Minister for Youth Development, Sports Culture and the Arts of the House of Representatives, Grenada

Ms Jacqui-Sampson Meiguel
Clerk of the House, of Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Mr Lenox Joash Proctor
Clerk of the House of Assembly of Anguilla

Hon. Gail Texeira MP
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance of the National Assembly of Guyana

Programme Summary

This section provides a summary of the CPA Post-Election Seminar, capturing key findings from each of the virtual sessions.

Session 1: The Opportunities and Challenges of Being a Newly Elected MP

The opening session saw Hon. Oscar Requena MP, a returning Member and Hon. Aldo Salazar, a returning Senator share the opportunities given, challenges faced and lessons learnt from their experiences so far.

They provided insight into the following:

- Adopting a respectful and civil approach to debates.
- Conducting oneself in a professional and reputable manner, befitting of a public servant.
- The importance of familiarising oneself with the Standing Orders.
- The need for reform of the existing Standing Orders.

Members and Senators of the National Assembly of Belize reflected on their own opportunities and challenges and these reflections were used as a basis to guide discussions during the remainder of the Seminar.

Some of the reflections included the following:

Opportunities:

- The Committee work and Parliament's commitment to the modernisation of the Standing Orders.
- The representation of the NGO'S and other social partner Senators in the Senate to speak on issues of National importance.
- Online courses to educate new parliamentarians.
- Ability to educate and inform the public on the work of the House and Senate.
- Opportunity to address the key issues of constituents as well national and international commitments like the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Challenges:

- Understanding the House/Senate process without any formal induction or orientation process for new Parliamentarians.
- Identifying and accessing the relevant contacts information for fellow Parliamentarians, key government officers and support available at the time of appointment/election.
- Transitioning into politics without any mentorship.
- Infrastructure of the National Assembly.
- The partiality of Committee Chairs.
- Unified acceptance of the independence of a politically appointed Speaker.



As pointed out in the CPA Benchmark 10.1.2 “the legislature shall be open and accessible to persons with disabilities.” The National Assembly is considering conceptual drawings to accommodate space and functionality.

The CPA’s two Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines are tools that provide various examples of best practices that can be adopted by both Parliaments and Parliamentarians in order to continue to ensure that they sensitively address Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with disabilities. It is encouraged that Members access the CPA Disability Communications Guidelines for information on how to enhance and sensitise their communications with persons with disabilities.



The CPA’s Top 10 Tips For New Parliamentarians




Tip 1: Don’t Panic

Although this comes straight out of the Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, the advice is still sound for newly elected or appointed Members of Parliament. Remember, many people have walked in the same shoes as you, and most, if not all, have come away unscathed. Stay calm and follow the advice below. A good tip, get your bearings. Go to Parliament on day one and take a look around. Get comfortable with your surroundings. Take a seat in the Chamber and congratulate yourself for getting this far. People want you to succeed. Especially all the people that just elected you. It’s in their interest that you do well.

Tip 2: Remember Who You Work For

As a Parliamentarian you may have to answer to your local political party, your whip, a senior minister, the Speaker, a committee chair and perhaps lobbyists. But your boss is the people that elected you. You are answerable and accountable to them. It can be easy to forget as you only have to go through the process of being elected every four to five years. But you are a democratically elected representative and although decisions are delegated to you to make in Parliament, it is essential that you remember whatever decision you make, they are the ones you have to justify your decisions to. However, you cannot please everyone all of the time, perhaps some of the people some of the time. If you try to make everyone happy, you will probably make nobody happy.



Tip 3: Seek Advice



No one expects a new Member of Parliament to know all the answers. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help! Seek out clerks and parliamentary officials, your whips, former or current experienced Parliamentarians to give you advice and support. Befriend a clerk and treat them well, they are worth their weight in gold. You never know they may offer advice you didn't even know to ask. Look outside of Parliament. Use academics, NGOs, CSOs and most importantly remember the CPA is here to help too. Go on induction trainings, use online courses. What you learn early on will be invaluable for years to come.

Tip 4: Have A Plan

As the saying goes "fail to plan, plan to fail". Sit and write down what you want to achieve whilst you are a Parliamentarian. This might be a one year goal, or for your whole term of office. Be realistic! Identify how you want to do it, what steps are needed, who can help you achieve this goal. Identify easy wins, but also the more challenging reforms. You might want to change the law or get the Government to change a policy. Pin your plan to your office wall as a reminder. A set of goals are important to keep you on the right track and stop you from getting distracted. You will also have something to measure your performance against. Remember there are no job descriptions for Parliamentarians, so its up to you!



Tip 5: Specialise



A good piece of advice for new Parliamentarians is to develop a speciality or an expertise in one or more thematic areas. It could be something you did in a previous career or something very important to your constituency. It might be on education, sustainable development, cybersecurity or even parliamentary procedure. Whatever you decide, take steps to keep abreast of developments and work with other leading experts. Why is this important? Parliamentarians who become known as an expert tend to get recognition from all Members and the Government. You will get asked for your input and will often be the first to get called upon in a debate. You might also get on a relevant committee or if you are lucky, a ministerial post.



Tip 6: Draw Your Red Lines

From the very beginning it is essential that you take the time to determine what you will, but more importantly, what you won't do. It is helpful to remember you are human and not just a parliamentary-robot. You will have a family, friends, hobbies, maybe even an additional career outside of Parliament. To ensure you have a healthy work-life balance, determine how much time you want to dedicate to being a Parliamentarian so that other things don't get pushed to the side. There is often a pressure early on to commit to everything, to attend every reception, every meeting and work very late. But keep a tight grip on your diary, and be willing to say NO.



Tip 7: Keep It Clean



When you are standing at an election you often have to come across as a saint. Whiter than white and pure as the driven snow. But as a Parliamentarian you are also a human-being that can be flawed. Therefore it is important to remember to manage expectations and to try as best as possible to keep your moral compass pointing in the right direction. Follow your codes of conduct, be thorough in complying with Members interests and ensure what you are transparent and not corrupt in actuality or perception. As a Parliamentarian, you are a role model and so ensure you uphold the highest of standards. But be warned, "there is no such thing as a free lunch!"

Tip 8: Keep Positive

Mental health and wellbeing is often overlooked by Parliamentarians who feel they should be impervious to all pressures and problems. At times you will have setbacks. You won't always achieve your goals the first-time around. You will inevitably face bad press, abuse on social media, criticism from colleagues, your constituents and others. You'll be told to have a thick-skin and to ignore it, but that isn't always easy to do. Keep sane, remember it's just a job. Remember you have family, friends and others who can support you, and if you need to seek professional support there is no stigma in doing so. Focus on the positives and the small victories. But always put your health first.



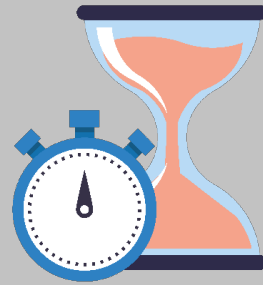


Tip 9: Read Your Standing Orders!

It might surprise you to note that many Members of Parliament never read their Parliament's rules for procedure. If you want to know the rules of the game then you must take the time to read the Standing Orders. Ask a clerk or colleague for a copy. Read it thoroughly. It will tell you what you can and cannot do, what powers you have, how to conduct yourself in the Chamber, what privileges and immunities you have. They are rules approved by your predecessors. But remember you can change these rules, you own them not the Speaker. Use these for Points of Order which can give you an advantage over your opponents across the floor of the Chamber.

Tip 10: What's Next?

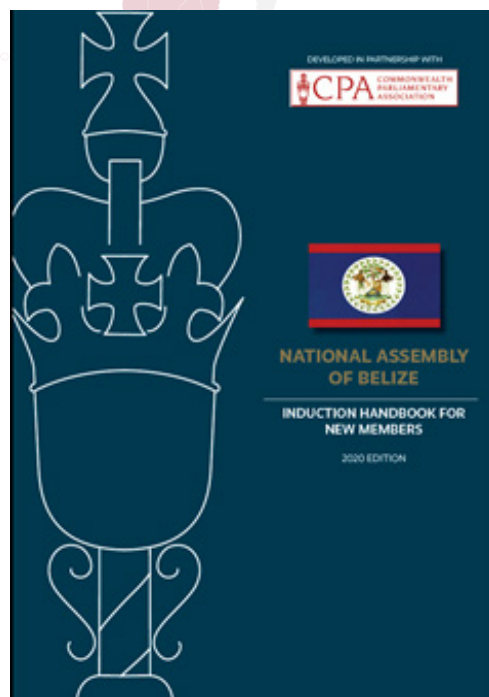
This is probably a strange tip to give someone who has just been elected as a Parliamentarian but it's important to consider throughout your term of office what you should do next. Many Parliamentarians struggle to adapt to life outside of parliament. How to get another job, what sort of career should you do next, if any, and how to cope in a role that comes with less public attention. This can be very hard for some, so it is useful to always keep in mind that being a Parliamentarian is just one job. If you are unfortunate enough to lose an election, or if you want to change careers you should always take the time in advance to focus on professional development. Keep in mind that nothing is forever.



Session 2: Services and Resources for Parliamentarians

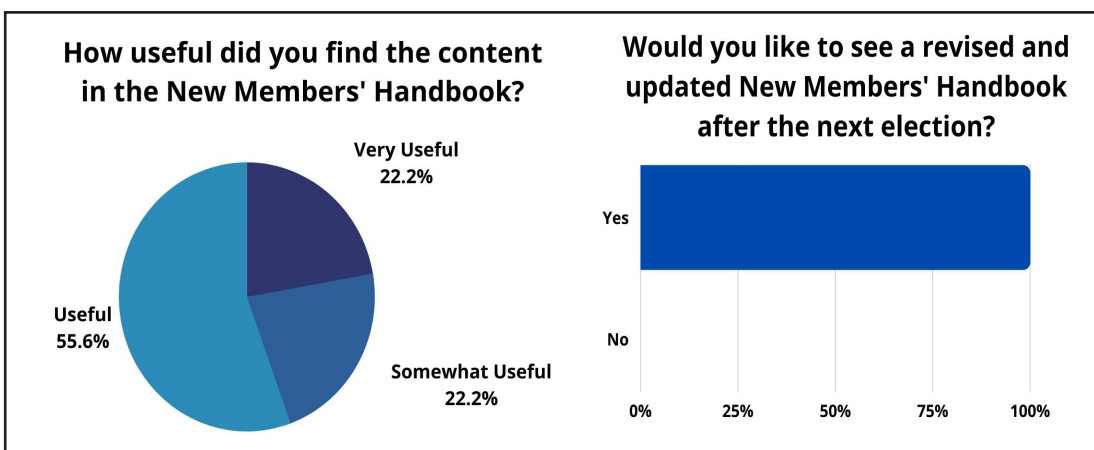
This session was a great opportunity for parliamentarians to learn first hand, from Mr Eddie Webster, Clerk of the National Assembly of Belize and Ms Clarita Pech, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly of Belize about the services and facilities available to them within the National Assembly of Belize. Parliamentarians also discussed some of the resource challenges the Houses face and related these to those of the National Assembly of Guyana as Hon. Gail Teixeira MP, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, spoke to the resources available in her legislature.

One of the new resources available to Parliamentarians at the National Assembly of Belize is the New Members' Handbook 2021. The Handbook acts as a bite-size initial guide and reference point to ensure that the first days in the National Assembly are as smooth as possible for new and returning Parliamentarians. It explores the security management in Parliament; various emergency procedure; the administration of Parliament; finance; things to consider on the topic of conduct and parliamentary business; relevant resources and other logistical matters that may facilitate an easy transition into Parliament.



One of the challenges raised in virtual Session One on Opportunities and Challenges of a Parliamentarian was identifying and accessing the relevant contacts information for support and parliamentary staff. This handbook also provides an introduction to them, accompanied by their relevant contact information.

At the start of the session, participants answered a poll on the handbook. The results of the poll were as follows:



TIP:

“It is critical for parliamentarians to have access to the institutional memory of documents, for their own reference, as well as the preservation of those documents.”
 Hon. Teixeira MP

TIP:

Although some relevant documents such as Acts, Budget Estimates, Annual Reports etc, are accessible on the parliamentary website here: <https://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/> - speak with the small team of parliamentary staff to access verbatims and other records that date as far back as the 1886, whilst the Assembly continue in their quest to get these digitalised.

There are a variety of other academic resources that can be found online which may support Parliamentarians:

- *Google Scholar* (<https://scholar.google.co.uk>), is a freely accessible search engine that indexes information on, and often the full text of, an array of publishing across multiple disciplines including political science.
- Often comparative analysis can prove useful in learning from the work of other parliaments when focusing on your own as a Parliamentarian. With this in mind, the website *Caribbean Elections* (www.caribbeanelections.com) is a useful source for finding out information not only about the elections of fellow Caribbean states, but also on budget statements, political parties and other political information on 28 Caribbean states.
- Another useful resource when researching internationally would be the website *Our World in Data* (www.ourworldindata.org), which holds a great amount of data worldwide on policy issues of Demographic Change, Health, Food and Agriculture, Energy and the Environment among many others.
- Paid resources can also benefit the understanding of Parliamentarians in areas that free resources do not cover. Journals such as the *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* and *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* are available at the Taylor & Francis Group's website (www.tandfonline.com). Another option would be the online platform *Europa World Plus* (www.europaworld.com).



COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH SERVICE (CPRS)

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service (CPRS) offers Parliaments and Parliamentarians a research service on a range of specialist subjects.

The CPRS will conduct or commission research from across our Commonwealth Branches, which will seek to compile comparative information about parliamentary practices. The service is offered to all Branches and we invite input from all Branches.

Members and staff of the National Assembly of Belize are encouraged to utilise the research services provided by the CPA through CPRS.



Session 3: Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities

In this session, Members and Senators explored the various privileges and immunities afforded to parliamentarians in different legislatures and how parliamentarians can exercise these privileges. Parliamentarians heard more from Hon. Gail Teixeira MP, as well as Hon. Senator Stanley Kutcher from the Senate of Canada and Mr William Wong, the Parliamentary Counsel in the Office of the Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

On the matter of parliamentary privilege during debates, here are some things all Members and Senators should consider:

- Parliamentary privilege and freedom of expression should be guarded at all times, even against speakers who are “unfair.”
- Parliamentary privilege should not be abused. You may bring different styles of speaking to the debates but the content of the debate must be fact-based. Character assassination and personal attacks are not acceptable.
- The electorate places trust and confidence in Parliamentarians and this should be in the forefront of your mind when debating and in turn, dictate the manner in which you conduct yourself during debates.
- Obstructionist behaviour like abusing the right to block votes is not acceptable.
- The speaker should facilitate the orderliness of the debate.

Standing Orders alone should not be viewed as the comprehensive codification of procedure given the unwritten customs and practice that exist in Parliament.

There are three steps that Senators and Members can take if they feel that their privilege has not been respected:

- 1) Raise a question of privilege by tabling a substantive motion with one days’ notice;
- 2) Rise in the Senate without notice;
- 3) Raise this through a Committee Report.

Remember that being a Parliamentarian is a privilege in itself so privileges should be upheld and your conduct, raised. It is therefore, important that Parliamentarians do not abuse the law outside the confines of Parliament and should be held accountable by their party leaders or Presiding Officers.

“Parliamentary Privilege is a shield to protect and not a sword to attack.”

Senator Kutcher, Canada

It is always important to consult with the office of the Clerk if you have a question regarding privilege, they can help with:

- **Understanding the Standing Orders.**
- **Knowing what to do if you suspect there has been a breach of privilege.**
- **Clarification on any queries relating to privilege.**
- **Seeking advice on any unwritten customs or practices.**

Session 4: The Legislative Process

This session was a great opportunity for Members and Senators to look at the capacity building of parliamentarians by examining the legislative process in alignment with the constitution. The speakers Hon. Senator Marilou McPhedran from the Senate of Canada, Mr Jean-Phillippe Brochu, the Principal Clerk in House of Commons in Canada and Ms Jacqui-Sampson Meiguel, the Clerk of the House at the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago looked at the various stages of legislation, types of bills, pre and post-legislative scrutiny, and oversight of delegated legislation to uncover why all parliamentarians should play a role in the process to create the best laws for the people of Belize.

Consider the necessary evolution of the legislative process to reflect that of the broader society. A great example of this in the Parliament in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

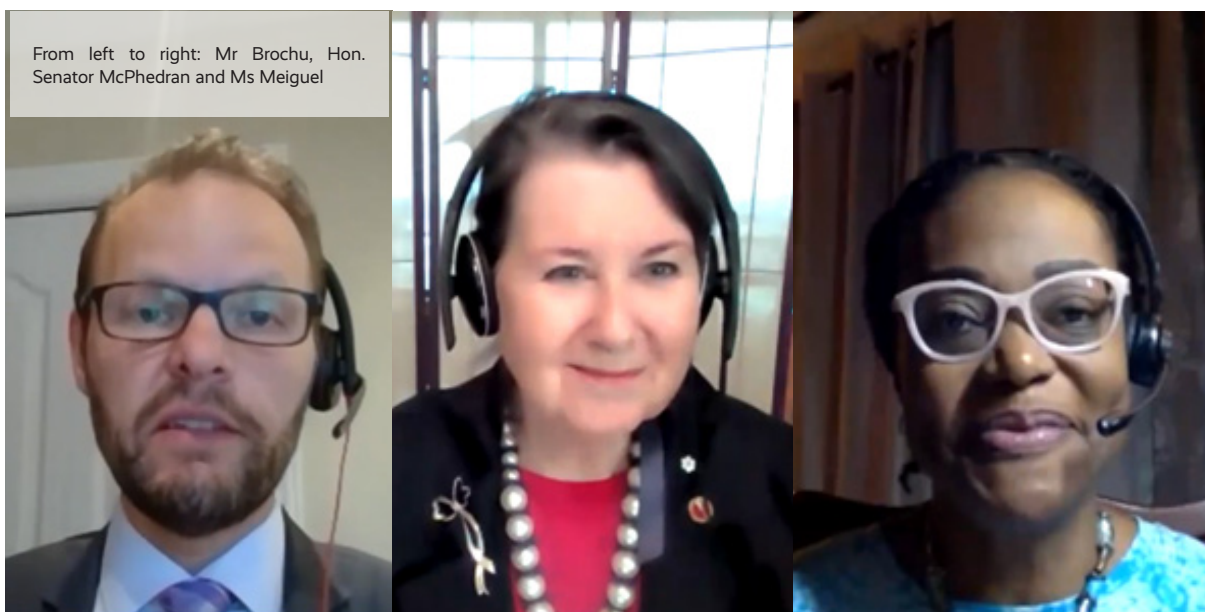
There has been a shift in the legislative process in recent times. Typically the bill would go to committee after the second reading, however, in more recent times in Trinidad and Tobago, bills will go to committee after the first reading. Although this can often lengthen the process, this allows Parliamentarians to maximise their engagement in the legislative process, familiarise themselves with the policy and really feel they are a part of the making of a policy that becomes law.

TIP:

Don't neglect the non-legislative action to strategise and influence the legislative process and maximise your potential:

- Meet with parliamentarians in both Houses;
- Meet with members of the public/your constituents to discuss the bill;
- Issue news releases on the topic;
- Give interviews;
- Host informative webinars;
- Use your social media platform to raise awareness!

From left to right: Mr Brochu, Hon. Senator McPhedran and Ms Meiguel



Session 5: Standing Orders and Modernisation

In this session, Hon. Kate Lewis MP, the Minister for Youth Development, Sports Culture and the Arts in the House of Representatives in Grenada explored the importance of Standing Orders and why it is so vital to keep them regularly updated. Participants looked at the upcoming review of the House of Assembly of Belize's Standing Orders in collaboration with the CPA as part of the commitments made in the Memorandum of Understanding with the CPA. The Anguilla House of Assembly recently reviewed, and are in the process of, updating their Standing Orders and Hon. Jose Vanterpool MHA and Mr Lenox Joash Proctor, the Clerk from Anguilla shared advice and best practices on adopting and implementing amendments based on their experience.

Who owns the Standing Orders?

“Standing Orders do not end when an election is called, they continue to stand even when the Members and Senators change and regardless of who constitutes the Parliament that develops, amends and upholds them, Parliament should always be a reflection of the people; so in theory, the people own the Standing Orders.” Hon. Vanterpool, MHA, Anguilla

How do you determine what parts of your Standing Orders need amending?

By identifying international good practice and relevance.

How do you determine what is international good practice and relevance?

The CPA Benchmarks are a great standard by which to assess not only Standing Orders but also the general administration of the Parliament.

Benchmarking is best done by an entity independent of Parliament for the most honest and accurate evaluation. Although this might not be the most comfortable process, it is the most rewarding. Your Parliament will be given a set of 20 recommendations through this benchmarking process, which could include some areas of reform for the Standing Orders.

The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures document is accessible from: <https://www.cpahq.org/media/IQjkk2nh/recommended-benchmarks-for-democratic-legislatures-updated-2018-final-online-version-single.pdf>

The benchmarking process is just one way relevance can be established with external stakeholders and it can be done with the involvement of former Speakers and Senate Presidents in the review process, as they will have had experience working directly with the Standing Orders to uphold to integrity of the Houses.

During the review process remember to:

- Engage with key players in the Assembly.
- Engage with the public for transparency, but to also educate them on how the Assembly works before proposing changes or taking contributions.
- Get the final approval from all relevant people before updating the amendments.



Session 6: Ethics, Standards and a Code of Conduct

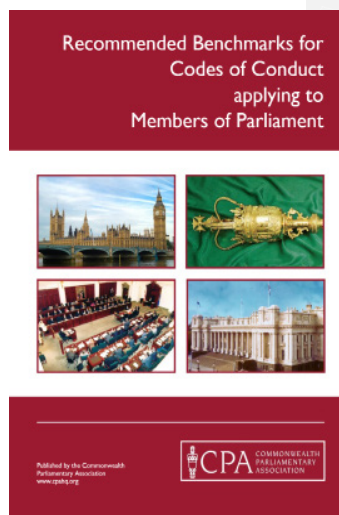
This session looked at the importance of establishing an ethical culture within Parliament and participants identified examples of good and bad practice in public service with support from Mr Kevin Deveaux, an International Expert in Democratic Governance and Accountability.

Members and Senators both looked introspectively at the National Assembly of Belize and with consideration to their upcoming development of a Code of Conduct (one of the commitments of the Memorandum of Understanding with the CPA), identified what key principles they sought to be included:



The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Code of Conduct have been designed by experts on the development of parliamentary Codes of Conducts and with the knowledge shared from first-hand experience of Parliamentarians, the CPA Recommended Codes of Conducts is a tool that aims to develop or strengthen existing provisions affecting the conduct of Parliamentarians. It is encouraged that Members and Senators access the CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Codes of Conducts for key principles on parliamentary standards.

The document is accessible from:
<http://www.cpahq.org/media/3wqhbbad/codes-of-conduct-for-parliamentarians-updated-2016-7.pdf>



The 7 Nolan Principles¹

Members and Senators should ensure that they are mindful of the core tenets of being a Parliamentarian in their work, these fundamentals are perhaps best exemplified by the seven Nolan Principles mentioned on this following page.

Selflessness	Act solely in the public interest, as opposed to in the interest of financial gains or other benefits for yourself, friends or family.
Integrity	Do not place yourself under any financial obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your duties.
Objectivity	Be objective in carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, Parliamentarians should make choices on merit.
Accountability	Parliamentarians are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
Openness	Parliamentarians should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
Honesty	Parliamentarians have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
Leadership	Parliamentarians should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

¹ The Seven Principles of Public Life were established to outline the ethical standards that individuals working in the public sector should adhere to. They were first set out by Lord Nolan, a UK judge who chaired the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995. The principles were have been included in a range of Codes of Conduct across public life. Further information can be found via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

Session 7: The Committee System

This session was a great opportunity for Parliamentarians to learn more about the Committee system and the importance of Parliamentary scrutiny and oversight. Hon. Beverley Schäfer MPP, the Deputy Speaker of Western Cape Provincial Parliament, and Lord Gilbert of Panteg, from the United Kingdom House of Lords led the discussion on the role of a Human Rights Committee.

Human Rights Committees on public policy issues should not be restricted to one particular topic of investigation or scrutiny. These Committees should: assess Parliamentary bills to ensure that they are compatible with human rights legislation; ensure that they are consistent with Common Law established rights and consistent with the Parliament's other international obligations and scrutinise government responses to judgements of human rights courts.

Committee Best Practices:

In the House of Representatives, Members are encouraged to bring their experiences working with their local communities to Committee discussions and in the Senate, Senators are encouraged to bring their expertise and experience from their relevant field to Committee. Relevant stakeholders and other organisations should be included in the process and Committee reports can also be disseminated to them in order to keep them engaged with parliamentary work.

Committees should try to reach a consensus and produce unanimous recommendations to go into the report; a stronger report is much harder to challenge or dismiss.

Members and Senators working in a cross-party manner are encouraged to go into Committee open-minded when listening to evidence and diminish any ideological assumptions for the sake of a fair Committee process. A report developed free from political bias maintains a high level of oversight and is one that is also much harder to challenge or dismiss.

TIP:

How to engage members of the public with the work of the Committees?

Consider inviting the public to observe a Committee hearing by broadcasting the sessions and publicising a transcript or even invite members of the public to join in person as silent observers.

Right: Hon Schäfer MPP, left: Lord Gilbert



Presiding Officers Only Session

The female Presiding Officers from across the CPA Caribbean, Atlantic and Americas (CAA) Region engaged in an informal but intimate discussion concerning the experiences, opportunities and challenges presented when presiding over parliamentary chambers that are predominately dominated by male Members of Parliament. The session was attended by Hon. Brigid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago; Hon. Rochelle Forde, Speaker of the St Vincent and Grenadines House of Assembly; Hon. Jeannine Giraudy-McIntyre, President of the Senate of St Lucia; The Hon. Christine Kangeloo, President of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago; Hon. Carolyn Trench Sandiford, President of the Senate of Belize; Hon. Charliena White, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat; Hon. Alincia Williams-Grant, President of the Senate of Antigua & Barbuda and; Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representative of Belize.

Presiding Officers have a duty to ensure that Parliamentarians are doing what they are called to do, by moderating and governing discussions within the chamber. This dialogue allowed for the transfer of advice and best practices that can enhance the ability of women parliamentarians in their role as Presiding Officer and ultimately provide them with the support needed to navigate the corridors of being a female Presiding Officer.

TIP:

- Remain impartial.
- Have a comprehensive understanding of the Standing Orders, practices and conventions.
- Set the tone of what will and will not be tolerated during parliamentary sittings by addressing any inappropriate behaviour and conduct such as the use of inappropriate language.
- Recognise and recommend appropriate actions needed to help your Parliament successfully become a gender sensitive institution by committing your parliament to a gender sensitive review that will be delivered by the CPA.
- Update your Standing Orders so that they are reflective of the current processes.
- Think about your legacy, outreach and what long-lasting accomplishment and impact you want to achieve at the end of your term.
- Consider holding public discussions on issues that are of relevant to society or developing a youth programme that introduces young people to the roles and functions of parliament.
- Establish relationships with your peers, parliamentary staff and knowing when and how to reach out to someone for support advise.
- Seek support or advice from other female Presiding Officers across the CAA Region during their term in office.

GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENTS GUIDELINES

Designed to encourage Parliaments to look into priority areas that need to be strengthened in order to help legislatures to become effective gender sensitive institutions. Members and Senators are encouraged to access the CPA Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines to understand the necessary conditions of parliaments to deliver on their responsibility to reach the standard of gender sensitivity and to identify the actors and means through which reforms are implemented. The document is available from: <https://www.cpahq.org/media/s20j1lws/cwp-gender-sensitizing-guidelines.pdf>

Session 8: Giving Parliamentarians a Voice: Amendments, Debates, Parliamentary Questions and Motions

This session saw participants delve into discussions on the practice and effectiveness of the different tools they can use to raise issues of importance, including; contributing to debates, drafting and signing motions, written and oral questions and raising issues at the constituency level. Hon. Jose Vanterpool MHA from the House of Assembly in Anguilla rejoined for this session and was accompanied by Deputy Robert Ward, States of Jersey.

TIP:

If you are well-versed on your Standing Orders, you are better able to understand the process, the regulations you must comply with and the terminology you can use, you will be able to use these to your advantage and maximise your opportunities when amending legislation.

Think carefully about the very specific change you seek to make and what it is that you would be addressing, then expect this to be challenged so be prepared to challenge the possible counteractions.

Look for available support and resources within Parliament or externally for support in drafting a bill or even amending legislations. In drafting a private members' bill, you can approach law firms or other organisations affiliated with the subject for direct value to be obtained for them in support either with funding or otherwise.

Follow up on your attempts to change legislation whether they were successful or not. If they were unsuccessful, don't give up and remember that you are elected/appointed to make a difference and making or amending legislation are great ways to do so.

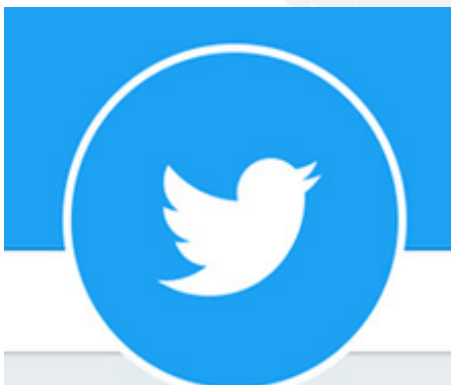
When questioning Ministers on legislation, remember that questions can be your biggest tool and think carefully about your line of questioning with relation to what you want to achieve and choose your language appropriately. Build a bank of previous answers that Ministers have responded with, and use them as a resource to quote back to them when challenging them in the future. In using these techniques, you may get the answers you want to hear to move an issue or gain clarity.

Left: Hon. Vanterpool MHA,
Right: Deputy Ward



Session 9: Public Outreach, Representation and Education

Whose role is it to ensure the public is engaging with Parliament? Deputy Robert Ward from States of Jersey, Ms Kamela Palma, Chairperson of Ramphal Institute and Mr Shem Ochola, Deputy Director Commonwealth Foundation unpicked the answer and demonstrated what various techniques parliamentarians can use to promote the public's understanding of the work of the Legislature.



Tips:

- Use your social media platforms to reach as many people as possible.
- Build good constructive working relationships with media outlets.
- Work collaboratively with credible civil society organisations to promote the public's understanding of the work of the legislature.
- Be inclusive and relatable, speak to the public in the language they understand.

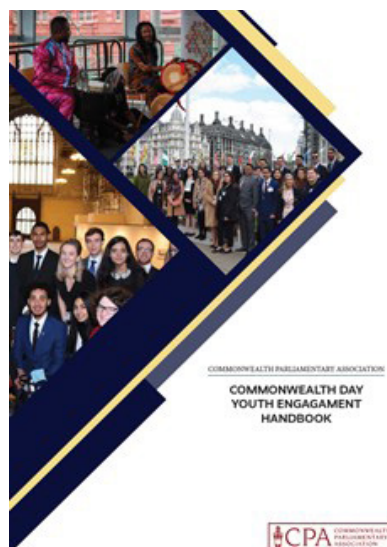
More information on the Commonwealth Foundation can be found at:

<https://commonwealthfoundation.com/>

More information on the Ramphal Institute can be found at:

<https://www.ramphalinstitute.org/>

There are many different ways in which Parliaments can engage the public and you can take inspiration from the outreach activities mentioned in the Commonwealth Day Youth Engagement Handbook. This toolkit was developed to provide parliaments with various measures and recommendations that can be adopted by both the legislature and its Parliamentarians in order to continue to deliver on the institutions' role of scrutinising legislation and delivering democracy during a global pandemic. The topic of Commonwealth Day can be substituted for a topic of your choice, and the outreach activities can still be made applicable.



Session 10: Technology, Innovation and COVID-19

The final session looked at the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the functioning of Parliament. Hon. Beverley Schäfer MPP, the Deputy Speaker of Western Cape Provincial Parliament, Lord Gilbert of Panteg from the House of Lords in the UK and Mr William Wong, the Parliamentary Counsel in the Office of the Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario all rejoined to share the best practices that have been implemented by their legislatures and have thus far ensured parliamentary business continues as usual.

There are a variety of resources available online that share parliamentary activity during COVID-19 and how Parliaments have used technology to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 to continue to operate. Here are some links with data that can be used to inspire your legislature:

- *Inter Pares* have an online Parliamentary responses during the COVID-19 Pandemic – Data Tracker. The link can be found here: <https://datastudio.google.com/embed/u/0/reporting/191dd812-cb5e-432c-aae1-a743bbc2678f/page/c8SNB>
- The Inter-Parliamentary Union also have an online country compilation of parliamentary responses to the pandemic. The link can be found here: <https://www.ipu.org/country-compilation-parliamentary-responses-pandemic>



The CPA is also hosting a Virtual Conference on the 4th Industrial Revolution, held from 5-9 July 2021 which will advocate for parliaments to embrace innovation and change rather than being limited to acting as bastions of tradition and history. Parliaments will need to legislate, regulate and scrutinise complex and advanced technical changes in years to come, from the use of bioengineering to artificial intelligence as

well as ensuring greater access to science and technology specialists. The Conference invites parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to join with industry leaders, innovators, experts and academics from the private, public and third sector to discuss emerging trends in technology and their potential impact on our society. For more details on how to attend, check out the link: <https://www.cpahq.org/events/cpa-virtual-conference-the-4th-industrial-revolution/>

The CPA also produced this toolkit to provide parliaments with various measures and recommendations that can be adopted by both the legislature and its Parliamentarians in order to continue to deliver on the institutions' role of scrutinising legislation and delivering democracy during a global pandemic.

Members and Senators are encouraged to access the CPA COVID-19 Toolkit to obtain a guide on how parliament can convene digitally. The document is available from: <https://www.cpahq.org/media/gb1athp1/cpa-toolkit-covid-19-coronavirus-e-version.pdf>

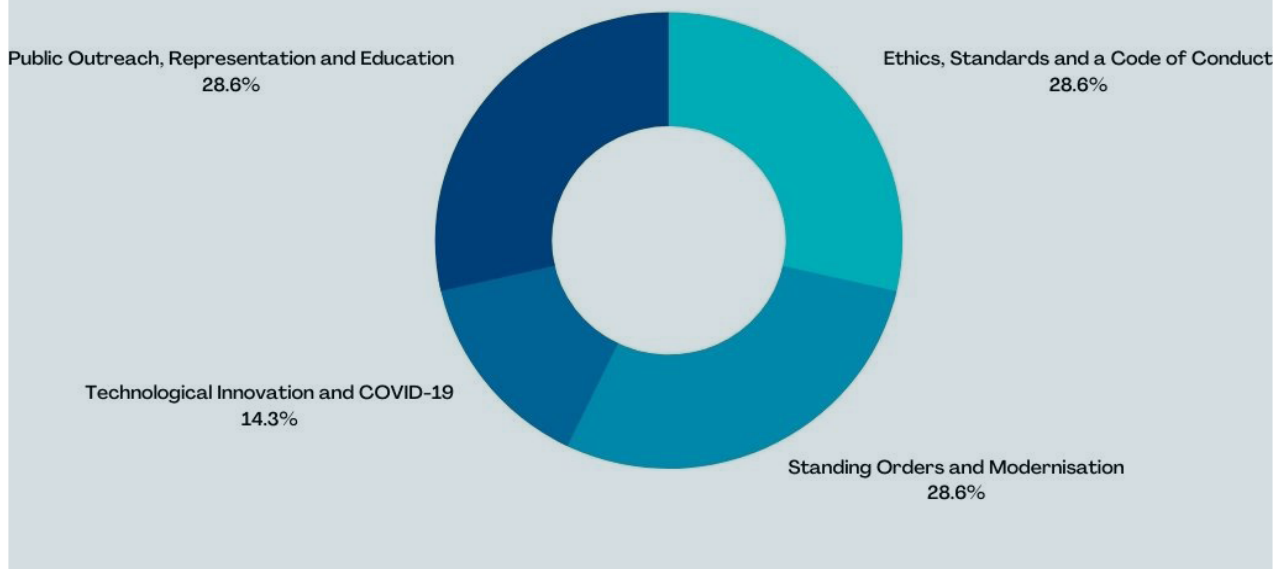


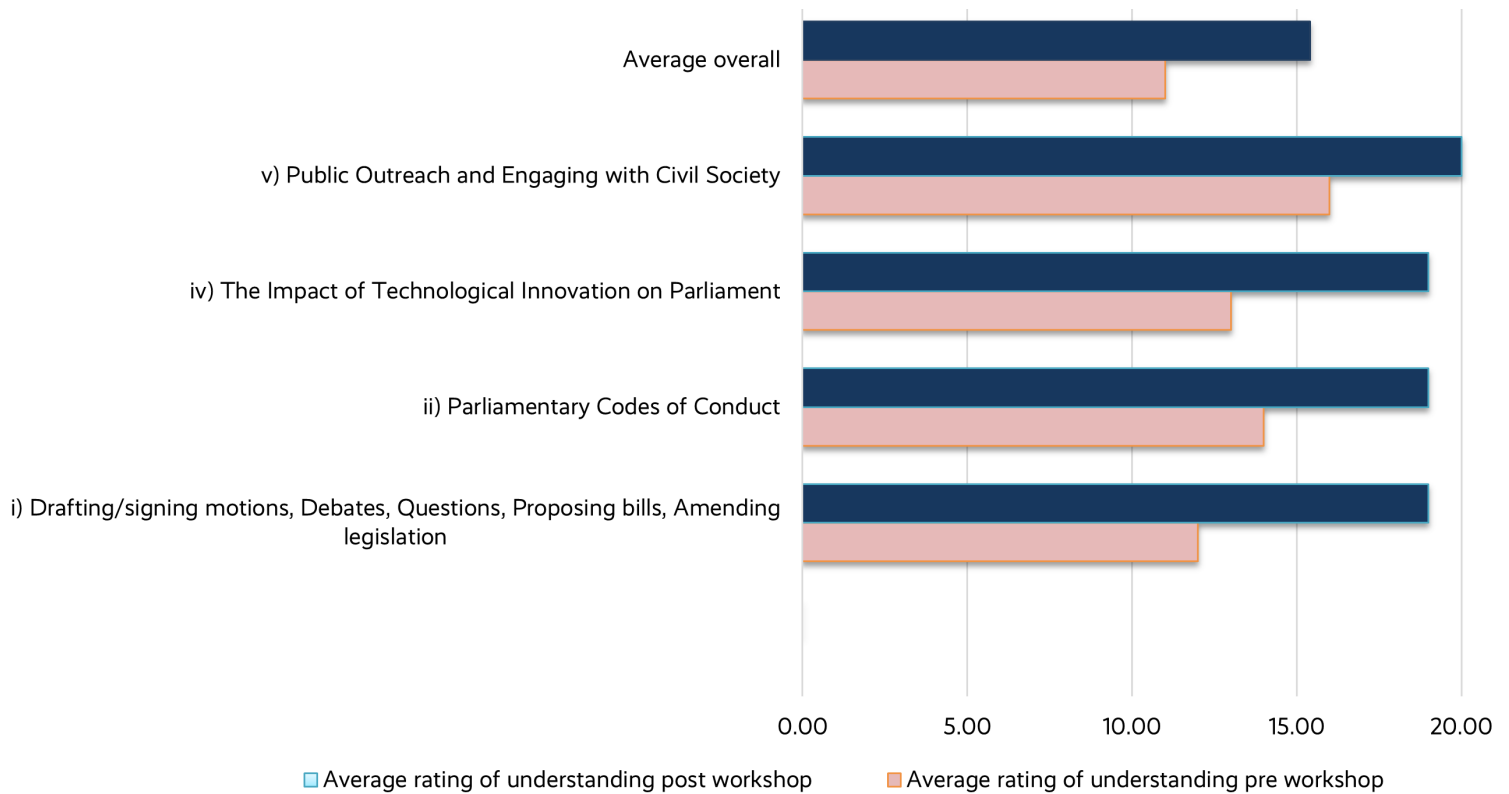
Monitoring and Evaluation Report

During the week, Members and Senators were provided with the opportunity to give ongoing feedback on the sessions and recount any expectations and insights. Members and Senators were also invited to complete pre- and post-assessment forms and their results can be found in the graphs below.

The feedback provided by Members and Senators on the programme was positive. Members and Senators overall were satisfied with the format of the sessions and the quality of the speakers and were completely satisfied with the facilitation of the sessions. Members and Senators were questioned on their levels of knowledge related to pertinent issue areas on parliamentary practice and procedure.

What session did Parliamentarians find most useful?

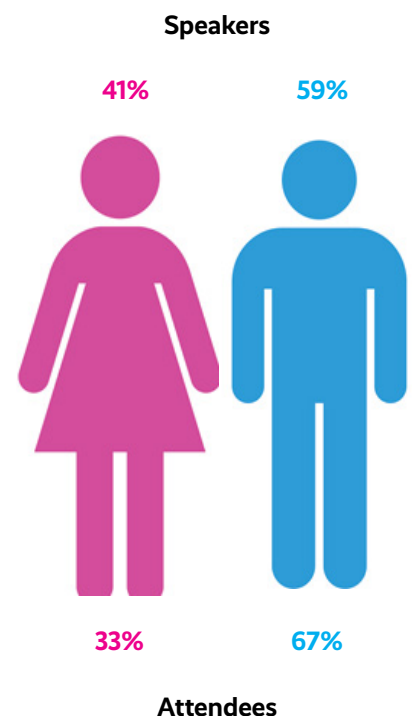




Overall, levels of knowledge and understanding increased in almost every area. A six month follow up with the participants of the Post-Election Seminar will be conducted to see how Members are using the skills they learnt during the Seminar and applying them in practice.

The Seminar was attended by 9 female and 18 male attendees and featured 22 speakers from 10 different countries.

9 female and 13 male speakers participated in the Seminar.



"This Post-Election seminar was held in the year in which Belize celebrates its 40 years of independence. Belize' s new parliament: house and senate, government members, opposition and social partners, have a golden opportunity to set the stage for how we wish the next 40 years to unfold and provide the example for the youth and leaders of the future. The fault will only lie in ourselves if we do not seize this chance to make our parliamentary system work better for members and the people of Belize."

Hon. Speaker Valerie Woods MP

"Participating in the Post-Election Seminar was enjoyable, insightful, and rewarding, and will undoubtedly contribute immensely to enhancing the delivery of our parliamentary responsibilities to the people of Belize. The peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge, skills sets and best practices between new, returning, and experienced parliamentarians locally and from the CPA fraternity, was invaluable, and we all left inspired and motivated as to the change we would want to bring about for a more effective and democratic parliament. It was also timely, as 40 years post our independence, Belizeans are now, more than ever, demanding better governance, of which the law-making and oversight role of parliament is crucial. In addition, and without a doubt, this seminar provided an ideal platform for a new generation of parliamentarians and thought leaders to begin to conceptualize the architecture of the kind of parliament needed to respond to these demands and that of the next generation."

Hon. President Carolyn Trench-Sandiford

Seminar Programme

TIME	SESSION
09:00-09:30 (CST)	OPENING OF THE VIRTUAL POST-ELECTION SEMINAR Participants will be introduced to the format of the virtual Post-Election Seminar and will be asked to fill in a survey to record their expectations and learning processes. Opening remarks will also be made from the following: <i>Speakers:</i> <i>Hon. Speaker Valerie Woods MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Belize</i> <i>Hon. President, Carolyn Trench, President of the Senate of Belize</i> <i>Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association</i>
16:00-16:30 (BST)	
30 minutes	
09:30-10:15 (CST)	VIRTUAL SESSION 1: THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF BEING A NEW PARLIAMENTARIAN In this session, participants will identify opportunities and challenges of being new Members and Senators. The outcomes will form the basis for the wider programme. <i>Speakers:</i> <i>Hon. Minister Oscar Requena MP, National Assembly of Belize</i> <i>Hon. Senator Aldo Salazar, National Assembly of Belize</i>
16:30-17:15 (BST)	
45 mins	
10:15-10:30 (CST)	Break
17:15-17:30 (BST)	
15 minutes	
10:30-11:15 (CST)	VIRTUAL SESSION 2: SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS This session will be an opportunity for parliamentarians to learn more about the services and facilities available to them within the National Assembly of Belize. Parliamentarians will also have opportunity to discuss some of the resource challenges the Houses face and to understand the services and resources parliamentarians would need in order to better carry out their roles. <i>Speakers:</i> <i>Mr Eddie Webster, Clerk of the National Assembly of Belize</i> <i>Ms Clarita Pech, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly of Belize</i> <i>Hon. Gail Teixeira MP, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, National Assembly of Guyana</i>
17:30-18:15 (BST)	
45 mins	

VIRTUAL SESSION 3: PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

11:15-12:00
(CST)

This session will explore the privileges and immunities afforded to parliamentarians in different legislatures across the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region. Freedoms and exemptions granted to parliamentarians will be explored in close detail, to examine how parliamentarians can best exercise these privileges.

18:15-19:00
(BST)

45 mins

Speakers:

Hon. Gail Texeira MP, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, National Assembly of Guyana

Hon. Senator Stanley Kutcher, Senate of Canada, Canada

Mr William Wong, Parliamentary Counsel, Office of the Clerk, Legislative Assembly of Ontario

VIRTUAL SESSION 4: THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

12:00-12:45
(CST)

This session will focus on capacity building of parliamentarians by examining the legislative process in alignment with the constitution.

19:00-19:45
(BST)

It will look at the various stages of legislation, types of bills, pre and post-legislative scrutiny and oversight of delegated legislation. In addition, the session will offer views on why all parliamentarians should play a role in the process to create the best laws for the people of Belize.

45 mins

Speakers:

Hon. Senator Marilou McPhedran, Senate of Canada, Canada

Mr Jean-Phillippe Brochu, Principal Clerk, House of Commons, Canada

Ms Jacqui-Sampson Meiguel, Clerk of the House, Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**12:45
(CST)**

End of Day 1

**19:45
(BST)**



TIME	SESSION
09:00-09:15 (CST)	GUIDED REFLECTION OF DAY 1
16:00-16:15 (BST)	An opportunity for discussion on learning and outcomes from the previous day.
15 minutes	
VIRTUAL SESSION 5: STANDING ORDERS AND MODERNISATION	
09:15-10:15 (CST)	This session will explore the importance of Standing Orders and why it is so vital to keep them regularly updated. It will give consideration to the upcoming review of the Standing Orders, exploring the best practices on adopting and implementing any amendments.
16:15-17:15 (BST)	
1 hour	<p><i>Speakers:</i> <i>Hon. Kate Lewis MP, Minister for Youth Development, Sports Culture and the Arts, House of Representatives, Grenada</i> <i>Hon. Jose Vanterpool MHA, House of Assembly, Anguilla</i> <i>Mr Lenox Joash Proctor, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Anguilla</i></p>
VIRTUAL SESSION 6: ETHICS, STANDARDS AND A CODE OF CONDUCT	
10:15-11:15 (CST)	This session will explore the importance of establishing an ethical culture within Parliament. It will identify examples of good and bad practice in public service as well as giving consideration to the ongoing development and later, implementation of the Code of Conduct for parliamentarians.
17:15-18:15 (BST)	
1 hour	<p><i>Speakers:</i> <i>Hon. Davendranath Tancoo MP, House of Representatives, Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago</i> <i>Mr Kevin Deveaux, International Expert in Democratic Governance and Accountability</i> <i>Ms Lydia Buchanan, Programmes Manager, CPA</i></p>
11:15-11:30 (CST)	
18:15-18:30 (BST)	Break
15 minutes	

VIRTUAL SESSION 7: THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

- 11:30-12:30
(CST) This session will be an opportunity for parliamentarians to learn more about the committee system and the importance of parliamentary scrutiny and oversight. There will a discussion on the role of a Human Rights Committee. This session will also look at how reports should be written and how recommendations are formulated.
- 18:30-19:30
(BST)
- 1 hour

*Speakers:**Hon. Beverley Schäfer MPP, Deputy Speaker of Western Cape Provincial Parliament**Hon. Davendranath Tancoo MP, House of Representatives, Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**Lord Gilbert of Panteg, House of Lords, UK*

- 12:30-13:30
(CST)

PRESIDING OFFICERS ONLY SESSION: THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS

- 19:30-20:30
(BST)

This breakaway session for female Presiding Officers will focus on the multifaceted role and function of the Presiding Officers, in both upper and lower Houses. The session will allow female Presiding Officers to share their experiences and exchange best practices on how to succeed in their respective roles.

1 hour

**12:30
(CST)**

End of Day 2

**19:30
(BST)**



TIME	SESSION
09:00-09:15 (CST)	GUIDED REFLECTION OF DAY 2
16:00-16:15 (BST)	An opportunity for discussion on learning and outcomes from the previous day.
15 minutes	
VIRTUAL SESSION 8: GIVING PARLIAMENTARIANS A VOICE: AMENDMENTS, DEBATES, PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS	
09:15-10:15 (CST)	Parliamentarians have a wide range of tools at their disposal to raise issues of importance. This session will explore the practice and effectiveness of the different tools, including; contributing to debates, drafting and signing motions, written and oral questions and raising issues at the constituency level.
16:15-17:15 (BST)	
1 hour	
<p><i>Speakers:</i> <i>Hon. Jose Vanterpool MHA, House of Assembly, Anguilla</i> <i>Hon. Juan Watterson SHK, Speaker of the House of Keys, Tynwald</i> <i>Deputy Robert Ward, States of Jersey</i></p>	
VIRTUAL SESSION 9: PUBLIC OUTREACH, REPRESENTATION AND EDUCATION	
10:15-11:15 (CST)	Whose role is it to ensure the public is engaging with Parliament? This session will explore the various techniques that parliamentarians use to promote the public's understanding of the work of the Legislature.
17:15-18:15 (BST)	
1 hour	
<p><i>Speakers:</i> <i>Deputy Robert Ward, States of Jersey</i> <i>Ms Kamela Palma, Chairperson of Ramphal Institute</i> <i>Mr Shem Ochola, Deputy Director Commonwealth Foundation</i></p>	
11:15-11:30 (CST)	Break
18:15-18:30 (BST)	
15 minutes	

VIRTUAL SESSION 10: TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND COVID-1911:30-12:30
(CST)

This session will look at the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the functioning of Parliament. It will further explore the best practices implemented by legislatures across the globe in order to ensure that parliamentary business continues whilst accommodating remote working.

18:30-19:30
(BST)

1hr

*Speakers:**Hon. Beverley Schäfer MPP, Deputy Speaker of Western Cape Provincial Parliament**Lord Gilbert of Panteg, House of Lords, UK**Mr William Wong, Parliamentary Counsel, Office of the Clerk, Legislative Assembly of Ontario*

CLOSING CEREMONY12:30-13:00
(CST)

This official closing of the Post-Election Seminar will provide the opportunity for attendees to voice their thoughts on how the event went. There will also be closing remarks from the following:

19:30-20:00
(BST)

30 min

*Speakers:**Hon. Speaker Valerie Woods MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Belize**Hon. President Carolyn Trench, President of the Senate of Belize**Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*

**13:00
(CST)****End of Day 3****20:00
(BST)**



About The CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) exists to connect, develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance, and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

The CPA is an international community of Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance and parliamentary practice. Parliaments, their Members and officials learn from each other through a wide range of CPA activities.

The CPA represents more than 180 Parliaments and Legislatures in 53 Commonwealth countries. Its network extends to over 17,000 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff and is the only Commonwealth organisation to represent national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures.

CPA members are democratic, law-making Parliaments and Legislatures. Speakers or Presiding Officers preside over CPA Branches with support from Government and Opposition Leaders and Parliamentary Clerks or Secretaries.

All CPA Branches are autonomous and regarded as equal. There are nine Regions of the CPA: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; South-East Asia.



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