



Report of the Senedd's participation in the
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
61st Canada Regional Conference
21-24 July 2025
Québec City, Québec



Photo: Delegates of the 61st Canada Regional Conference in front of the Assemblée Nationale du Québec

Delegation:

Deputy Presiding Officer, David Rees MS

Al Davies (Acting Branch Secretary)



Photo: Deputy Presiding Officer, David Rees MS with the Hon. Nathalie Roy, President of the Assemblée Nationale du Québec

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Background

The Senedd (Welsh Parliament) was invited by the Assemblée Nationale du Québec to attend the CPA Canada Region Conference which it hosted in Québec City between 20-24 July 2025.

The invitation followed sustained and productive relations and engagement between the Senedd and the Assemblée Nationale du Québec, since 2022.

This had included, most significantly, over the past year:

June 2024 – the Official visit to the Senedd by President Nathalie Roy and accompanying delegation.

November 2024 - The Llywydd and Speaker Nathalie Roy shared a stage at the CPA Annual Conference in Sydney (NSW) where they both delivered keynote addresses on the topic of "*The Retention of Women in Politics*".

May 2025 – The Llywydd was invited for an official programme at the Assemblée Nationale du Québec . During which an MOU was signed by the Llywydd and Speaker Nathalie Roy on behalf of the Senedd and the Assemblée Nationale du Québec

June 2025 – the Assemblée Nationale du Québec’s participation in the Senedd hosted CPA BIM Regional Conference.

Report by David Rees MS



Photo: Deputy Presiding Officer, David Rees MS addressing the CPA Canada Conference.

Having only experienced participation in BIM Regional Conferences previously, it was of interest to the Senedd delegation, attending as international observers, to note how the Canada Region Conference would differ in both content and format, and which lessons could possibly be fed back and may be considered for adoption by colleagues within our own Region, in going forward.

Some of the key observations noted were:

- the size of the Canada Region Conference, with some 100 delegates and participants (typically double that of our BIMR Conferences).
- that CPA Canada Region Conferences always take place during the same week in late July (the first week of the Summer recess). This tradition was deemed to be positive, allowing the legislatures and their Members to plan their parliamentary calendars with certainty.
- the fixed agreed rotation between the Provinces and Territories to host the Regional Conference. Again this was considered, by those we spoke to, to be a

positive convention which provided stability, the certainty that there was a host lined up for the next conference, and that host Branches could plan and budget in a timely manner.

- unlike the BIM Region, Canada doesn't operate on a "*he who hosts pays*" basis and a conference fee is payable, with delegates also paying for their own accommodation costs.
- The CPA Canada event incorporates a *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians* (CWP) programme at the beginning of the wider conference. The BIMR may wish to consider the merits of this model for our own future Conferences and – even if not adopted as part of our constitution - allow Host Branches the option of including the CWP (as well as other CPA networks) as part of our Regional Conferences, as opposed to having to host separate conferences.
- The CPA Canada general conference began with a session on "*jurisdiction reports*". This provided an opportunity for each of the 13 Canadian Provinces and Territories to address the conference with a timed 3-minute limit contribution, to update delegates of developments and matters of interest taking place within their own legislatures.

I was pleased that his courtesy was also extended to us, as international observers, and I took advantage of this opportunity to highlight some of the topical developments happening within our own Senedd. (*A shortened copy of my address is included in Annex A*).

On reflection, I believe that this item of jurisdiction updates, delivered orally, worked well and is something that our own Region should consider adopting as part of our BIMR Conferences. Whilst aware that all Branches currently have the option of submitting verbal reports, these are often lengthy and technical in nature and I question how much of a reach and impact they have, in this current format.

This was a great and rare opportunity to raise awareness of Wales and our national parliament in front of an audience of parliamentarians and clerks spanning the whole of Canada and its diverse cultures, traditions and languages .

It was clear from the numerous people who subsequently came to speak to me that there was genuine interest in the Senedd as a progressive, bilingual legislature and, in particular, of the constitutional changes which will take place in Wales at the 2026 elections. I have no doubt that this will result in new official visits to the Senedd from Canada and opportunities to share best parliamentary practice bilaterally.

The session on "*Casting votes: A Speaker's Perspective*", led by the Hon Raj Choucham MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, was of particular interest to me. It struck me how rare a parliamentary procedure as having a casting vote by a Speaker appeared to be in BC (and possibly other Canadian legislatures) as opposed to our experience at the Senedd, where this is a far more common occurrence.

Within the margins of the Plenary Session on Human Rights, I was pleased to raise with Members that, as part of this year's BIMR Conference (hosted by the Senedd in Wales), we had become the first CPA Region to establish an LGBTQ+ Network for parliamentarians. The offer was made to share further information about this work with colleagues and that they too might wish to explore the possibility of establishing a similar network for the CPA Canada Region.

I was honoured to be invited to an official dinner for Speakers present at the CPA Canada Conference, hosted by President Nathalie Roy at the iconic Chateau Frontenac.

Summary

This was a valuable opportunity to raise the profile of the Senedd within Canada, particularly to Canadian Provinces which had little knowledge of Wales and had no previous direct engagement with the Senedd. It was also a pleasure to re-engage with parliaments with whom the Senedd had previously worked with and visited, such as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as well, of course, with our Quebecois hosts.

**Annex A – Edit of Address by Deputy Presiding Officer, David Rees MS
to the CPA Canada Conference.**

Bore da – Bonjour – Good morning.

Can I please begin by thanking our hosts, the National Assembly for Québec for kindly inviting us here. It has been many years since Wales has participated as an International Observer in another CPA Regional Conference and this is, I believe, the first time for us to attend a CPA Canadian Region Conference. It's very good to be here.

I'm aware that this session is intended to be an update of developments over the past year but, if you will indulge me, I'd like to use just a minute of our allocated three as a brief overview of the Senedd – the Welsh Parliament.

Cymru – Wales – Pays de Galles is an Old Nation with a Young Parliament.

We are unicameral, currently with 60 Members, representing a population of around 3 Million people.

We are a proudly bilingual parliament and in 2003, with little fuss or fanfare, became the world's first legislative body to gain gender parity.

A well-known quote states that "*Devolution is a process and not an event*" and that is certainly true of politics in Wales. The Senedd we currently sit in has already undergone many changes since we first sat in 1999. These have included a successful referendum to gain primary legislative powers, a change of name and extending the voting franchise to 16 and 17 year olds.

However, we are currently preparing to undertake what will undoubtedly be the biggest changes yet to Welsh devolution as we will, at next May's Senedd elections, become a parliament of 96 Members (an increase of 60%) with a completely new electoral system and map.

In preparation for that significant change, our Chamber is currently being completely renovated to accommodate the Members who will make up our next Senedd.

I do hope you will all come and visit our parliament in Cardiff Bay when you have the opportunity, one of the most striking features of which remains the stunning Canadian Red Cedar wood ceiling, sourced from British Columbia.

Thank you for your attention and thank you once again for the welcome.

Diolch. Merci Beaucoup.

ANNEX B - Conference Media Statement by CPA Secretariat

Examining parliamentary democracy and issues affecting modern Parliaments at 61st CPA Canada Regional Conference hosted by National Assembly of Québec.

Over 100 Commonwealth Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Clerks have examined parliamentary democracy and strengthening Legislatures at the 61st Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Canada Regional Conference, which has taken place in Québec City, Québec from 20 to 24 July 2025.

Delegates were welcomed to the CPA Canada Regional Conference by Hon. Nathalie Roy, President of the National Assembly of Québec/Assemblée Nationale du Québec and CPA Québec Branch President.

The CPA Canada Regional Conference was attended by Members of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Legislatures of the Region.

Delegates attended workshop sessions on a wide range of topics including:

- Parliamentarians' role in protecting human rights;
- Elected representatives' responsibilities in the digital age: meeting the challenges of the Internet and social media;
- Disabilities and parliamentary life: removing obstacles, strengthening inclusion;
- Modernization of Parliaments;
- Parliamentary procedure in practice - Casting votes: A Speaker's Perspective.

Delegates also attended a special session on 'Canada-US Relations: Provincial and Territorial Cooperation and Leadership'.

The President of the Assemblée Nationale du Québec and CPA Québec Branch President, Hon. Nathalie Roy, MNA said:

"The CPA Canadian Regional Conference is held each year as a forum for dialogue, exchange and mutual inspiration. It provides a unique meeting space to strengthen our connections, which are especially important in these troubled times. I am delighted to see the strong engagement of our CPA Branches this year. We are welcoming about a hundred delegates gathered in Québec City, representing every corner of the country from coast to coast. This is a powerful testament to Parliamentarians' commitment to the work of our region.

Moreover, I would like to highlight that we are witnessing a historic moment - a first in the country - as we now have four women serving as Speakers of Legislative Assemblies. These four Speakers, from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and myself from Québec, are gathered here in Québec City for our Conference.

As usual, our CPA Canada Regional Conference is preceded by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference of the Canadian Region. This year's chosen theme, 'Parliament: A Place for Women', aligns directly with my priorities.

As the second woman to serve as Speaker of the Assemblée nationale du Québec in more than 230 years of parliamentary history, I have, since the beginning of my term, paid close attention to the role of women within our institutions. And I remind us all that it is only with the help of our male colleagues - those men of good will - that we will succeed in creating more egalitarian Parliaments, which will better reflect the aspirations of our free and democratic societies."

Delegates also toured the construction site at the Chamber of the National Assembly of Québec (salle de l'Assemblée nationale) which is undertaking a major reconstruction project.

Delegates represented CPA Branches from: [Canada Federal](#) (Senate of Canada and House of Commons); [Alberta](#); [British Columbia](#); [Prince Edward Island](#); [Manitoba](#); [New Brunswick](#); [Nova Scotia](#); [Nunavut](#); [Ontario](#); [Québec](#); [Saskatchewan](#); [Northwest Territories](#); [Yukon](#).

In addition, representatives from the CPA [Scotland](#) and CPA [Wales](#) Branches attended as observers.

Ahead of the 61st CPA Canada Regional Conference, the [Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians](#) (CWP) Canada Regional Conference also took place.

The CWP Canada Regional Chair, Hon. Susan Leblanc, MLA (Nova Scotia) chaired the meetings which focused on inspiring leadership for women in political life under the theme of 'Parliament: A place for women'.

Delegates heard from Hon. Nathalie Roy, President of the Assemblée nationale du Québec and Hon. Lucie Lecours, Québec Branch Representative on CWP Canada Steering Committee and held sessions on:

- Women Speakers of Parliaments;
- Work-family balance; and
- Combatting harassment in Parliament.

Members had the opportunity to hear about CWP Canada activities and to emphasise the importance of promoting the CWP to Parliamentarians across the Region.

The importance of exchange between women Parliamentarians was emphasised as well as the fact that four Provincial Legislatures and the Senate of Canada have women Presiding Officers or Speakers.

Acknowledgments:

The CPA Senedd Branch would like to put on record its sincere gratitude to:

Hon. Nathalie Roy, President of the Assemblée Nationale du Québec
Mélissa S. Morin, Conseillère en relations interparlementaires et internationales
The Assemblée Nationale du Québec, its Members and officials
The CPA Canada Region.
The CPA Secretariat.



Photo: Flags representing the 16 Parliaments present at the 61st CPA Canada Conference.