SCOTLAND WEEK VISIT TO NEW YORK, OTTAWA, QUEBEC CITY AND HALIFAX: 7-16 APRIL 2016

REPORT OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT DELEGATION

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Introduction
This is the report of the Scottish Parliament delegation to Scotland Week 2016. Following the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament on 23 March 2016 the delegation comprised only of the Presiding Officer, the Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP.

The focus of the programme was engagements and discussions on core parliamentary activities. Specifically, across the three parliaments visited in Canada, the continuous professional development of Members and parliamentary reform.

Since 1998, Tartan Day has been recognised by the US House of Representatives as an official celebration of the contribution of American-Scotts to US culture and life. Over the past 10 years Scotland-focused activity around Tartan Day has grown into a week-long programme to promote Scotland in North America and is now called Scotland Week.

Scotland Week 2016 was a programme of events in both the US and Canada, aiming to promote all things Scottish. Fifty million people across the world claim Scottish heritage, the majority being in America and Canada.

The Scottish Parliament’s budget for Scotland Week has been capped at £30,000 since 2009. The cost of this visit was £13,488.88 which covered the cost of travel, accommodation and expenses for the Presiding Officer and two accompanying staff.

The Presiding Officer wishes to thank each and every person who facilitated her meetings and engagements across the visit, and for the time and information which each person so willingly shared and the warmth and friendship across all of the programme’s activities (see Annex for programme).

Purpose
The purpose of the visit was to:

New York:
- launch the Harry Benson exhibition to be hosted in the Scottish Parliament in August
- participate in the Annual Tartan Day Parade

Ottawa, Quebec City and Halifax:
- hold discussions with elected Members and officials on the continuous professional development (CPD) of Members and parliamentary reform

and generally:
- support and promote, through the Scottish Parliament’s participation, activities which could bring wider economic benefit and added value to Scotland; and
- enhance the Scottish Parliament’s institutional and international reputation through involvement in Scotland Week activities.

With the imminence of Scottish Parliament elections, discussions on CPD were valuable and provided a useful and timely opportunity to hear more about the approach taken in Canada (of particular relevance were the federal elections in Canada in October 2015 so the House of Commons in Ottawa was able to share
very recent experiences). The outcomes from the discussions will be shared across the Scottish Parliament, both through this report and in one to one discussions at official level. Any resulting initiatives will be taken forward in discussion with the next Presiding Office and Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body as necessary.

The approach to Scotland Week has been to better link it to the Scottish Parliament’s International Strategy which identifies activities and countries it considers are strategically important. The Strategy states that the US remains a partner:

‘from which we can learn and offer support. Scotland has very strong links with North America in terms of business, tourism and culture’.

The Strategy goes on to state that the Scottish Parliament will:

‘build on existing links to strengthen and find further opportunities to cooperate with the parliaments and people of North America through, for example, the annual Scotland Week activity in the USA and Canada through our representation at this event’.

Programme

While New York has become a traditional starting point for the Scotland Week visit with participation in the annual Tartan Day Parade, the primary parliamentary focus this year was Canada and the discussions at the legislatures in Ottawa, Quebec City and Halifax. While the primary topics of discussion were continuous professional development of Members and parliamentary reform a number of other issues arose from these discussions which are highlighted in this report.

Friday 8 April 2016

The Presiding Officer met Harry Benson to discuss and finalise arrangements for the exhibition of his work to be hosted at the Scottish Parliament from 12 August-3 December 2016.

Saturday 9 April 2016

The Presiding Officer attended the St Andrew’s Society of the State of New York Kirkin’ of the Tartan service at the Brick Presbyterian Church. The service (non-denominational) was conducted by Society member, the Reverend George William Rutler. The service is a traditional prelude to the Tartan Day Parade. The Presiding Officer was pleased to give a reading at the service.

The Tartan Day Parade is seen as a high point of Scotland Week and, despite the weather this year, a very large number of participants took part in the Parade itself along with large and enthusiastic crowds lining Sixth Avenue. The Presiding Officer walked behind the Scottish Parliament banner near the front of the Parade.

Following the Parade the Presiding Officer attended receptions hosted by the America Scottish Foundation and the New York City Tartan Day Committee where she thanked, on behalf of the Scottish Parliament, everyone involved with the organisation of the Parade and for involving the Scottish Parliament.
Sunday 10 April 2016
The Presiding Officer transferred from New York to Ottawa.

Monday 11 April 2016
The Presiding Officer met with Senator George J Furey, Speaker of the Senate (see image below). The Presiding Officer had previously met Senator Furey when he visited the Scottish Parliament in August 2011 as part of a delegation headed by the then Senate Speaker Noel A Kinsella.

Discussion included the outcomes of the referendum with regards the devolution of further powers to the Parliament and how the Parliament, in particular the committees, responds to these. There was also discussion on the need to maintain the legacy from the referendum vote with regards the large civic participation and on the refurbishment works which are underway at the Federal Parliament building. The Presiding Officer shared the recent experience of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and its strong management and oversight of the new security and public access entrance to the building.

The Presiding Officer then met with Jeffrey LeBlanc, Principal Clerk and Director of the Members’ Orientation Programme. Key points to emerge from this discussion (based on the experience of the 2015 federal elections in Canada) are:

- the programme has been running since 1980s and was a process of continual learning as to what works and what doesn’t
it was important to ensure the timely and co-ordinated delivery of administrative, financial and procedural information and services required by Members before, during and after the election.

the approach taken in the House of Commons was to involve staff from all service areas (although there was no fixed budget for this work and it involved only one full time member of staff seconded to oversee the programme).

various committees report to a steering committee of senior managers.

a Members Orientation Centre, staffed by ‘liaison officers’ (1 per 12 MPs), opened the day after the election.

the liaison officers (which provides a useful professional development opportunity for all staff) help guide newly elected Members through the orientation process by acting as a link between them and the House administration which provides a more direct and personalised service for them.

transition officers provide a similar service for Members not re-elected or who are retiring and provide access to important information around severance payments, recovery of assets.

temporary offices are made available from where new Members work.

staff receive contact information for all candidates via Elections Canada.

the morning after the election, liaison officers will begin calling new Members and make arrangements for them to visit the House of Commons.

all new Members are strongly encouraged to attend four one-to-one meetings with key House offices:

- pay and benefits (payroll, insurance, pension, staffing)
- finance (budgets, expenses, public disclosure, travel, use of assets)
- legal (leases, employee contracts)
- information (smart phones, IT equipment)

these sessions are arranged within two weeks of the election and are all party.

the administrative sessions last around ½ day and spouses can attend.

experienced Members can be invited to attend and provide advice on staffing, time management and the impact the job can have on family life.

a procedural orientation session lasting one day is also arranged to provide new Members with information about first business in the Chamber and protocol and decorum.

again, experienced Members can provide advice on how new Members can maximise their effectiveness in the Chamber and in committees.

a service fair is arranged to familiarize Members and their staff on key services provided by the Parliament (e.g. public outreach, learning and development, managing an office, accessing and managing information).

longer term, a series of seminars are organised by the Orientation Programme Secretariat and the Library of the Parliament covering:

- procedural issues (role of committees, financial cycle, legislative process)
- administrative issues (Members office budgets)
- casework (immigration issues)
- public policy and research analysis

a web portal is created and which Members access via ‘Source’ app loaded on to tablets provided by the House and which are made available immediately to all Members.

this app contains access to information relating to the administrative issues outlined above (booking travel, hiring staff, setting up office etc.)
• it also includes a short ‘what to expect’ video and a digital binder for meetings with subject matter experts from the House Administration

It was noted that a number of these features had already been incorporated by the Scottish Parliament as part of its arrangements for newly elected and returning MSPs following the 2016 elections.

The Presiding Officer then met with Andre Gagnon, Deputy Clerk and Stephan Aube, Chief Information Officer to discuss matters relating to parliamentary reform and engagement. The Presiding Officer had previously discussed these matters when she visited the House of Commons in 2014 (as part of Scotland Week).

There were many similarities in the work which the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament are involved with in seeking to develop and maintain meaningful engagement with the public and with key individuals and organisations. A key role is played by committees through the inquiries which they conduct around the scrutiny and understanding of public policy issues and legislation with committees travelling around the country to meet and discuss with varied communities and individuals.

A number of issues arose in the discussion including the draft budget process, epetitioning, teacher engagement and online viewing of parliamentary proceedings.

As in Scotland, the budget year for the government in Canada runs from April 1 to March 31 although the planning for this begins much earlier with the preparation of departmental expenditure plans. These are developed in accordance with the government’s policy and budgetary priorities and the pre-budget consultations by the Standing Committee on Finance (similar to the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee). The expenditure plans are submitted to the House in their consolidated form as the “main estimates”. At the same time, the Department of Finance is compiling the information taken in during the pre-budget consultations and preparing its economic forecasts. The government’s efforts to reconcile its spending obligations and revenue projections are reflected in the budget.

The budget outlines the government’s fiscal, social and economic policies and priorities, while the estimates detail its projected expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year (typically the budget is presented in the second half of February). This information and discussion was helpful as the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament moves from the scrutiny of essentially a fixed block grant budget to spending plans by the Scottish Government, as set out in its annual draft budget each September) which include tax forecasting and revenue spend.

The House of Commons has recently introduced e-petitioning and an overview of the process was given. The Presiding Officer responded by outlining the Scottish process, where e-petitioning has existed since 2000, and how its rules were designed to ease the process for citizens to lodge petition (e.g. only one signature required, MSPs not allowed to lodge petitions).

The Teachers Institute initiative was discussed. This is a professional development opportunity for teachers where they have the opportunity to:
• learn from political, procedural and pedagogical experts;
• discuss key issues in citizenship and parliamentary democracy;
• develop strategies for teaching Parliament, democracy, governance and citizenship; and
• take what is learned back to the classroom.

They are able to meet with parliamentarians (including the Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons), hear from parliamentary experts, senior parliamentary officials, journalists and lobbyists, receive key resource materials which support teaching about Parliament, governance, democracy and citizenship; and watch the Parliament in action. Mention was made of how the teachers can effectively become ‘ambassadors’ for the Parliament.

A demonstration was also given of the system which provides live streaming of the House of Commons proceedings and public committees (live and on-demand) to a variety of mobile and desktop clients (ParlVu). From the desktop, this also offers an ability to prepare and download video and audio clips of the archived content.

**Tuesday 12 April 2016**
The Presiding Officer met with Howard Drake OBE, British High Commissioner. The High Commissioner gave a broad overview of political and other events in Canada. There was a discussion on the wider programme and the individuals and organisations with whom the Presiding Officer had met and was to meet.

The Presiding Officer then had a courtesy call with the Hon Geoff Regan MP (see image below), Speaker of the House of Commons. During the subsequent discussions the Presiding Officer and the Speaker spoke about some of the challenges which ‘parliament Speakers’ face from procedural issues to corporate matters to responsibility for the maintenance of the parliament estate (the Speaker spoke of the logistical and financial challenges faced by extensive renovation of the Parliament).
The Presiding Officer then attended, and was formally welcomed by the Speaker, at Question Period. Following Question Period, the Presiding Officer met with the Hon Kirsty Duncan MP whom the Presiding Officer met in 2014 during her previous visit to Ottawa. Ms Duncan, now Minister for Science, had been Co-Chair of the Canada/Scotland Parliamentary Friendship Group.

The Presiding Officer then transferred from Ottawa to Quebec City.

**Wednesday 13 April 2016**
The Presiding Officer was welcomed at the National Assembly of Quebec by President Jacques Chagnon MNA *(see image below)*. The Presiding Officer was then escorted to the Chamber to observe Question Period at which point she was formally welcomed to the Chamber by the President.

Following Question Period the Presiding Officer was given a tour of the Assembly building before making a courtesy call on the President. The Presiding Officer highlighted to the President the similarities in the issues raised at the Question Period and Question Time in the Scottish Parliament. There was a general discussion on the procedures around asking questions and the role of the chair in managing time and ensuring a balance of both Members and where possible issues.

The Presiding Officer then met with Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Quebec Branch), Marc Tanguay MNA and Stephane Bergeron MNA.
This provided a further opportunity to hear about the work of the Quebec CPA Branch and wider CPA activities. The Members and the Presiding Officer also discussed general parliamentary processes, the work of committees, and the outcomes from Question Period.

The Presiding Officer then met with Marc Painchaud, Director of the General Secretariat and the Secretariat Office and Francois Arsenault, Director of Parliamentary Work to discuss continuous professional development and parliamentary reform.

The Presiding Officer asked about the process for appointing chairs (conveners) of committees. The chair and vice-chair of a committee are elected by the members of that committee (at the first meeting) for a two-year term. They must not be from the same political party. The choice of chair and vice-chair must be supported by a majority of members from each parliamentary group represented on that committee. This, it is felt, gives the necessary legitimacy to these offices and invests the incumbents with the authority they then need to run meetings smoothly and efficiently.

This was an issue which the Presiding Officer had considered as part of her committee reform agenda.

There was a discussion on the process for welcoming and supporting new Members following a general election of by-election. The day after polling day the Secretary General of the National Assembly will call all new Members to discuss a number of initial matters including the date for swearing in, when the orientation and training day will take place, that key documents on conditions of employment, allowances, office organisation will be sent to them and that key Assembly staff will assist them in the coming weeks.

These key staff will then contact Members to seek initial core information (social security number, home address etc.). They will discuss the various documents sent to them, discuss IT requirements and discuss office set up requirements.

Within 15 days of the election, the orientation day for new Members and their spouse/partner is held. At this, five key workshops take place on:

- Members duties, the legislative process and Assembly operations:
  - procedures
  - organisation of business
  - parliamentary groups
  - conduct
  - committees
- Members employment conditions and office organisation:
  - budgets and payroll
  - insurance, retirement plans
  - allowances
- Assembly services to support Members:
  - broadcasting
  - building management
- security
- communications and education
- financial and human resources
- international relations
- technology:
  - tablets and smart phones training
- life/work balance:
  - presented by former Members of each parliamentary group

Around one month after polling day, two further orientation days are arranged for new Members staff and several of the above issues. Once Assembly proceedings have resumed further training sessions may be offered to Members individually, or in groups, depending on requirements. Members are also entitled to 1,500CAD per annum for second language training. The administration also offers support and guidance on more technical matters with a financial impact such as advertising and publicity, information security, best practice regarding telecommunications fees when abroad.

There was also discussion around the Assembly’s financial and administrative autonomy and specifically on its ‘own source revenue’. This is an extra-budgetary account which is composed of revenues from sources such as the restaurant, café, gift shop, leases. This account allows the Assembly to then fund building operations, purchase furniture etc. At the end of a given fiscal year, any surplus resulting from the difference between the approved budget estimates and expenditures may be transferred to the own-source revenue account. An example given was the Assembly was able, through this account, to self-finance the entire cost of its infrastructure improvement project (new reception pavilion and overall enhancement of security).

**Thursday 14 April 2016**
The Presiding Officer transferred from Quebec City to Halifax.

The Presiding Officer attended proceedings in the Chamber of the Nova Scotia Legislature where she observed the election of a new Deputy Speaker and then Question Period at which she was formally welcomed by the Speaker. Following Question Period, the Presiding Officer was given a tour of the Assembly, including the Assembly’s Library.

The Presiding Officer then had a courtesy call and meeting with the Speaker, the Hon. Kevin Murphy MP *see image below*. There was a discussion on the proceedings that afternoon and the process for electing a new Deputy Speaker. Also, there was discussion around Question Period and the range and type of questions asked and what challenges the Speaker faces in chairing proceedings, calling Members etc.
The Speaker discussed with the Presiding Officer a proposal he has submitted to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to create ‘Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD)’, founded by current Commonwealth parliamentarians with disabilities. At future conferences, delegates could discuss ways to increase persons with disabilities representation in parliament and work towards the mainstreaming of disability consideration in CPA activities and programmes. The CPwD would be formally recognised in the CPA constitution and its elected chairperson would be part of the CPA Executive Committee.

The Presiding Officer informed the Speaker that she was the President of the CPA (Scotland Branch). However, with the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament ahead of elections, this proposal wasn’t something which the Branch could consider at this time. However, she has subsequently drawn it to the attention of the Scotland Branch Secretary as a matter for the next Scotland Branch to consider once the proposal is formally disseminated down to all Branches from the CPA.

**Friday 15 April 2016**

The Presiding Officer visited Pictou where the first Scots settlers landed in 1773. The Presiding Officer was met by Mayor Joe Hawes and visited the Hector Heritage Centre where she was shown round the replica sailing ship, *Hector*. The ship set sail from Scotland in July 1773 with 179 passengers and arrived in Pictou on 15 September that year.

The volunteers at the Centre explained how the Centre worked and about the skills in replicating and maintain the Hector. The Presiding Officer was also shown around the McCulloch House Museum and Genealogy Centre which provides genealogy research, archival and library collections where she also met the former Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislature, Charlie Parker.
Friday 8 April 2016
- Presiding Officer meeting with Harry Benson

Saturday 9 April 2016
- St Andrews Kirkin’ of the Tartan Service, Brick Presbyterian Church
- Tartan Day Parade
- American Scottish Foundation post Parade reception
- NYTD post Parade dinner

Sunday 10 April 2016
- Transfer from New York to Ottawa

Monday 11 April 2016
- Courtesy call and meeting with Speaker of the Senate, the Hon. George J Furey
- Meeting on continuous professional development with officials
- Meeting on parliamentary reform and engagement
Tuesday 12 April 2016
- Meeting with Howard Drake OBE, British High Commissioner
- Courtesy call and meeting with Speaker of the House of Commons, the Hon. Geoff Regan MP
- Attend Question Period
- Meeting with Kirsty Duncan MP
- Transfer from Ottawa to Quebec City

Wednesday 13 April 2016
- PO welcomed by President of the National Assembly, Jacques Chagnon MNA
- Tour of Parliament building and National Assembly Library
- Courtesy call and meeting with President of the National Assembly, Jacques Chagnon MNA
- Meeting on continuous professional development and parliamentary reform with officials

Thursday 14 April 2016
- Transfer from Quebec City to Halifax
- Attend meeting of Assembly to observe election of Deputy Speaker and Question Period
- Courtesy call and meeting with Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislature, the Hon. Kevin Murphy MP

Friday 15 April 2016
- Visit to Pictou and Hector Heritage Centre