

Annual Report of the Parliamentary Centre 2006-2007



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**39th Annual Report of the
Parliamentary Centre
2006-2007**

For Additional Information Contact:

**Parliamentary Centre
255 Albert St., Suite 802
Ottawa, ON K1P 6A9
T: (613) 237-0143 F: (613) 235-8237
E: parlcent@parl.gc.ca
I: www.parlcent.ca**

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Annual Report of the Parliamentary Centre for the year ending 30 September 2007

Message from the Chair

William Corbett

**Photo to be
placed here**

It has been my pleasure on two occasions to succeed Bob Marleau in positions of responsibility, the first as Clerk of the House of Commons and the second as Chair of the Board of the Parliamentary Centre. I am pleased to report that, for all its challenges, the position of

Chair is proving to be substantially less stressful than that of Clerk.

I accepted the invitation to serve as Chair of the Board because I have long respected the work of the Centre and wanted to contribute to its ongoing success. I also saw this as an opportunity to reengage my earlier interests and work. Years ago before I joined the staff

of the House of Commons I spent eight years in Colombia working as a CUSO worker and a CIDA Co operant. Although issues of democratic governance did not occupy me on a day to day basis in rural Colombia, I saw clearly that the politics of the country were closely connected to its economic and social struggles. Recently, during a conference on democracy in the Americas, I was reminded by Latin American and Caribbean speakers that the struggle to reform politics remains central to the development prospects of many countries in the region.

I see the Parliamentary Centre as one of Canada's most useful instruments in extending Canadian assistance in support of good governance and democratic development and so am glad to be part of its ongoing work.

Report from the President

Robert Miller



I am writing this annual report in Phnom Penh Cambodia near the end of a month long mission to Thailand, Cambodia and China. My main purpose in coming to Cambodia was to attend the Presidents Forum which periodically brings together the members of the

Senate and National Assembly of Cambodia under the auspices of their Presidents to discuss issues related to the Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project (CCLSP), the Parliamentary Centre's five year CIDA funded project that is now drawing to an end. The theme of this years Forum was "Moving

Forward: Lessons Learned from the CCLSP". Commission Chairs and senior staff of the Secretariats reported on instances of concrete progress that has been made over the past five years to improve the performance of Parliament. To cite only a few examples, Senators and Deputies have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities, vigorous parliamentary debate is more accepted, parliamentary committees carry out their work of legislative review and investigation more regularly and effectively and the secretariats of the Senate and and National Assembly are better able to support the work of their members. Parliamentarians who spoke during the discussion period felt that the help provided by CCLSP had made an important contribution to strengthening

Parliament but they also stressed that the work of building parliamentary democracy in Cambodia has only begun. Parliament remains a poorly resourced institution and its role of performing oversight of the government and holding it to account is tightly constrained by party discipline and the dominant portion of the Cambodian Peoples' Party (CPP). In these circumstances, participants repeatedly urged the Canadian Government (represented at the meeting by the Charge d' Affaires, Erneste Longoin and CIDA project team leader Janet Lam) to continue its support for the Cambodian Parliament by approving a continuation of the CCLSP. In my remarks, I stressed the importance of the Cambodian Parliament making its own financial and other commitments to strengthening the institution. Amelita Armit, in reviewing the lessons learned during CCLSP, provided solid documentation of progress to date and identified opportunities for further progress, particularly in strengthening the representative role of Deputies and the role of the Senate in supporting commune councils. The very large turnout at the meeting, the fact that the National Assembly changed its agenda to facilitate the participation of its members and the strong endorsement of the leadership - all these and other indicators point to the high level of parliamentary interest and trust that has developed in the CCLSP. This owes much to the professionalism of the staff of the Parliamentary Centre's country office led by Bunleng Men, and in particular to their careful reading and adjustments to the delicate and ever shifting political context in Cambodia.

The Year in Review

Parliamentary Assistance Programs

The following are only some of the important examples of developments during 2006-07 in the design and delivery of the parliamentary assistance programs that constitute the heart of the work of the Parliamentary Centre.

- In Africa, the PC regional program received a positive assessment with some pointed recommendations for a more focused approach in the future and more attention to building relations with individual African parliaments. Following a successful planning forum with African partners in Accra, CIDA invited the

Centre to submit a phase two proposal and discussions commenced a new contribution agreement.

- In Asia, the China program was put on solid footing by the successful staffing of our field office. This improved communication between the Centre and the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the National Assembly which is responsible on the Chinese side for the overall management of the project. Meanwhile, the Cambodian program was assessed very positively by CIDA and planning began between the Centre and CIDA for a possible five year extension of the project.
- In Eastern Europe, CIDA positively assessed our work with the Russian Accounting Chambre and appeared open to the possibility of further work beyond the completion of the project in 2008.
- In Haiti, the Hon. John Bosley took up his position as project field manager, bringing many years of parliamentary development experience in Africa to the challenge of strengthening the extremely weak Haitian parliament in an exceptionally difficult political environment.
- As the year drew to an end, new initiatives were underway, with the possibility of Parliamentary Centre programs being developed in Afghanistan and Nepal, among other countries.

Research and Learning

Strengthening the research and learning capacities of the Parliamentary Centre is one of the main objectives of our strategic plan. During the year, we made modest progress in implementing this objective. The following are a few examples.

- I continued research on a PC framework for measuring parliamentary performance, first by working with IFES in testing "State of the Parliament" reports in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Egypt and then writing a report for the World Bank Institute on the current state of research on parliamentary performance. Research will continue in the next year to develop and test the Parliamentary Centre framework for measuring the performance of parliament in the budget process.

- The UNDP funded study on parliamentary research services is being extensively revised to make it more useful for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.
- Other

Governance and Management

As reported in previous Reports, the Parliamentary Centre is in transition to becoming Parliamentary Centre International (PCI), a network of Parliamentary Centres in Africa, Asia and other regions anchored in the Parliamentary Centre Accountability and Learning Centre in Ottawa. The following are some of the main developments in pushing ahead with this important strategic objective.

- 2006-07 saw the commencement of implementation of the project funded by the Office of Democratic Governance to strengthen Parliamentary Centre field offices in Africa and Asia in project management and development. The MIS system is also being strengthened by this project, as is work on the Parliamentary Centre performance framework.
- The new management team put in place last year has gotten off to good start, with the division of labour well defined and a strong sense of team work.
- Likewise the team approach has been applied to project development with encouraging results. Project proposals are now prepared in a more timely fashion after careful internal scrutiny and assessment.

Strengthening the Canadian Base

The changing policy environment

- Parliamentary Centre active in addressing July SCFAID report and Government reply issued just after end of year
- Building relations with Association of Former Parliamentarians
- Timely and strategic development of the “Political Parties and Parliaments” project

Confronting the Unsustainable Business Model

As 2006-2007 was drawing to a close the Parliamentary Centre faced one of those difficult periods in its 39 year history that challenge the imagination and commitment of staff and Board alike. Although the Centre has grown into an effective organization that is widely recognized as a world leader in the field of parliamentary development, it has also hit the wall of its business model. For a combination of reasons analysed carefully by the Vice President of Resources, the Centre has entered into a period of recurrent deficits that have reduced reserves and used a portion of the Peter Dobell gift. While the Centre is still in a strong financial position, both Board and staff recognize clearly that current financial performance is unsustainable.

Accordingly, a major objective of the next year is to bring the Centre back into line with the Board policy of generating a slight budget surplus each year thus adding steadily and incrementally to our reserves and financial strength. To this end, it has been decided to focus the Board retreat planned for early 2008 on the issue of the Centre’s business model in order to identify the steps that need to be taken to re-establish the financial balance of the organization. To assist in the process, I recommended to the Executive Committee that we commission David Rattray, former assistant Auditor General, to work closely with the Vice President Resources in carrying out a diagnostic analysis of the Centre’s business model and to prepare a report for consideration of the Board at its retreat. The Executive Committee strongly supported this recommendation. Both the Board and senior management of the Centre believe that Mr Rattray and the Vice president Resources, Helene Haddad, may jointly identify specific changes that can and must be made on both the revenue and cost side of the budget.

The Challenges Ahead

It would be an understatement to say that the Parliamentary Centre faces challenges in the year ahead. Both the financial difficulties of our current business model and the shifting policy environment mean that we must be alert and adaptable. But as we approach the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Parliamentary Centre, there is no reason to be pessimistic about our prospects for successfully confronting the challenges before us. The Parliamentary Centre has always been alert and adaptable, the product of having to work for our supper at every step of the way. The environment

while challenging is no more difficult than it has been at some points in the past. One of the major benefits of spending an extended period on the road, talking to our partners, is that it puts things in perspective. If Cambodia can confront its challenges, as it appears to be doing, if China can make the remarkable turnaround it has since the damage caused by the cultural revolution, well then it should be possible for this hardy little 40 year organization called the Parliamentary Centre to go on to new and greater things. I have no doubt we will.

FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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Patron, Board of Directors, Staff and Associates of the Parliamentary Centre

**Patron: Her Excellency the Very Honourable Michaëlle Jean
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.
Governor General of Canada**

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Mr. Jean-Marc Hamel

The Honourable Ken Kowalski, MLA of Alberta

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MSM, CD

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Mr. Michael Murphy

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Senator the Honourable Marcel Prud'homme, P.C.

The Honourable Claudette Tardif, Senator

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Dr. David Zussman, B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D.

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Coordinator, Corporate Development

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Resources

Hélène Haddad

Vice-President, Resources

Programs

Amelita Armit

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Rasheed Draman

Director, Africa Programs

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Lola Giraldo

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Laurie Groulx

Financial Program Officer

Lynda Davidson

Financial Accounting Officer

Hanan Abulmalik

Program Officer, Africa, Sudan Regional Office

Gifty Adika

Information Resource Coordinator

Ghana Parliamentary Committee Support Project II

Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Andryse Albert

Administrative Officer, Field Office for the Haiti

Parliamentary Support Project (HPSP)

Petra Andersson

Program Officer, Africa

Marilyn Aniwa

In-Country Project Coordinator

Ghana Parliamentary Committee Support Project II

Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Thomas Ayinbila

Financial Officer

Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Ivo Balinov

Program Officer, Asia and Eastern Europe

Ryan Barker

Program Officer, Africa

The Honourable John W. Bosley

Coordinator, Field Office for the Haiti

Parliamentary Support Project (HPSP)

Philip Cobina

Africa Poverty Reduction Office

Anna Demina

Program Assistant, Accountability Strengthening

Program, Moscow Office

Sandra DeMoura

Program Officer Africa

Berhanu Desta

Program Officer Africa

Tim Feng

Program Officer, Asia and Eastern Europe

Adams Fusheini

Information Resource Coordinator, Ghana Parliamentary

Committee Support Project II

Annie Gingras
Program Officer, Africa

Jane Gitau
Office Administrative Assistant, Africa Parliamentary
Strengthening Office (APSO), Kenya

Christine Ivory
Program Coordinator

Irina Koulatchenko
Program Assistant, Asia and Eastern Europe

Issifu Lampo
Governance and Budget Advisor
Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Bunleng Men
Project Field Manager, Cambodia-Canada Legislative
Support Project (CCLSP) Office

Mrs. Sokhayouk Mom
Deputy Field Manager, Cambodia-Canada
Legislative Support Project (CCLSP) Office

Françoise Ndoume
Program Officer, Francophone Africa
Senegal Regional Office

Joanne Nimchuk
Financial Assistant Africa

Valery Ponomarev
Field Manager
Accountability Strengthening Program
Moscow Office

Monica Quayson
Administrative Officer

Nortreda St-Martin
Program Assistant Africa

Valentina Tetteh
Administrative Officer
Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Charity Wakaba
Senior Program Officer Africa

John Wood
Program Manager Haiti and the Americas

Nansata Yakubu
Parliaments and Conflict
Ghana—Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)

Gina Zhang
Coordinator, Field Office of the Canada-China
Legislative Cooperation Project (CCLCP)

**Parliamentary Networks
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the
Americas (FIPA)**

Emanuelle Pelletier
Program Coordinator

Sabra Ripley
Program Officer

Cora Capurro
Communications and Public Relations Officer

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Martin Ulrich
Executive Secretary

Meaghan Campbell
Communications and Program(s) Consultant

Kimberly Jordan
Program Assistant

Associates

Hon. John Bosley, P.C
Senior Associate, Strategic Parliamentary Planning

Bob Gardner
Senior Associate, Parliamentary Research and
Information Services

Jacques Sabourin
Senior Associate, Parliamentary Management and
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Martin Ulrich
Senior Associate

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