

THE CANADIAN STUDY OF PARLIAMENT GROUP

2003 ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides highlights and an overview of the CSPG's programs and activities for the period between December 2002 and December 2003.

MOVING THE ORGANIZATION AHEAD

The membership approved a new constitution at the AGM in 2002 which had not been updated for several years. The constitution now defines a mandate that reflects the priorities and activities which have proven successful and relevant in recent years. It delineates activity areas and director's responsibilities for them, reports for which are presented in this annual report. It sets the date for the AGM no later than 90 days following the end of our fiscal year, so that members have a more timely report on financial and program activities.

At the AGM in 2002, the membership adopted a Strategic Plan for moving the organization ahead. We have continued to work on the recommendations in a variety of ways, including: implementing the new constitution, specifically by reorganizing how activities are organized and managed and assigning board members to specific activities or activity areas; seeking out partnerships in order to profile the organization or underwrite major initiatives; continuing successful activities, such as seminars and research publications, especially where the CSPG has found a niche; increasing regional activities; and improving the timeliness and amount of information about the Group and its activities, most specifically with regard to updating the web-site.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The CSPG is grateful for the continued support of the House of Commons, in terms of financial and human resources. Without it, we could not continue. In 2003, based on a review of the CSPG's requirements for support, the House assigned 1/3 of a procedural clerk's time to assist with planning, 1/3 of a program officer's time to continue managing logistics, administrative and financial activities and 1/3 of an administrative assistant's time to help with events and mail-outs.

The CSPG marked its 25th Anniversary in 2003. To commemorate the milestone, the CSPG inaugurated an annual essay competition for undergraduate and graduate students and initiated work on a CD-ROM compilation of past research publications for distribution to libraries and institutions across Canada.

Finances

Financial statements for the Group are presented with this report. Thanks to our strong membership numbers (334), the efforts of the Members of the Board of Directors, the Group continues to operate within budget.

RESEARCH / PUBLICATIONS

Parliamentary Perspectives

Planning is underway for the next issue of *Parliamentary Perspectives*, to be based on the February 27, 2004 conference. The subject of the conference is the process of electoral-system reform now underway in some of the provinces, and the impact that reform can be expected to have on the parliamentary system. There are a number of possibilities for the issue, including Premier Bernard Lord's speech at the luncheon and summation of the panel sessions. Some thought is also being given to an issue of *Parliamentary Perspectives* that is devoted to the publication of the prize-winning essays.

CD Rom of CSPG Publications

In 2003, the CSPG began work on the creation of a CD-Rom that will consolidate all of the Group's available research studies, conference reports and speeches since its establishment in 1978. These approximately 50 publications represent a significant wealth of knowledge on parliamentary government, the bulk of which remains presently unavailable to the public. In January 2004, the CSPG received the generous support of the Bank of Montreal to underwrite the costs of production and distribution. The Group has contracted the services of the Ottawa-based "Digital Interactive" to create the CD-Rom. Once completed – anticipated by the summer of 2004 – over 4000 copies will be distributed to Parliamentarians and their staff, legislative officials, academics and teachers, as well as university and depository libraries across Canada.

Publication of English Version of Millennium Conference

Reforming Parliamentary Democracy, edited by F. Leslie Seidle and David C. Docherty, was published in June 2003. This book, which originated in the conference sponsored by the Canadian Study of Parliament Group in June 2000, provides analyses of recent reforms to parliamentary institutions and governance in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The authors demonstrate how, in their respective countries, parliamentary governments have combined stability with the capacity to adapt to such changes. The chapters are grouped under the themes of representation, responsiveness and multi-level governance.

The chapter authors are: Jonathan Boston (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Paul Chartrand (consultant, Victoria, British Columbia), Stéphane Dion (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government of Canada), David Docherty (Wilfrid Laurier University), Mason Durie (Massey University), Robert Hazell (University College London), Christina Murray (University of Cape Town), Cheryl Saunders (University of Melbourne), Leslie Seidle (Elections Canada), Jennifer Smith (Dalhousie University), and Lord Wakeham (former Chairman of the Royal Commission on House of Lords Reform).

For information about ordering the book, see the McGill-Queen's University Press Web site at www.mqup.ca.

Essay Competition

The essay competition for undergraduate and graduate students was launched in 2003 and twenty-five students from across Canada, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, submitted essays in either English or French on such topics as parliamentary reform, the role of backbench members, judicial activism, and electoral reform. The first winners have been selected and they have been invited to the February 27 conference and to spend a day at Parliament the day

preceding. The winners are Shawn Friele and David Litvak; they will be introduced at the conference dinner.

CONFERENCES / SEMINARS

Conferences

The AGM is usually held in conjunction with our annual conference. Since there was a delay in holding the AGM until February 2004, the board took the decision to postpone the annual conference to February 2004 as well. As such there was no conference in 2003.

Parliamentary Business Seminars

The CSPG has been offering seminars on topical issues and other matters relating to the Canadian Parliament and parliamentary procedure since January 1997. These have been directed primarily at parliamentary relations officers (PRO) and other interested persons. Generally, one or two such seminars were held each year, with presenters drawn from the House of Commons, the Senate and the Library of Parliament. These proved to be extremely popular, and they generated important revenue for the Group.

In 2002, the CSPG decided to replace the rather *ad hoc* nature of these seminars with a more systemic approach. An advisory working group was constituted, composed of three CSPG board members, representatives of the PRO and government relations community, and other interested individuals. This group met several times in June and September 2002, and came up with a plan for a series entitled "Parliamentary Business Seminars." Designed for persons in the fields of parliamentary and government relations, the presentations would be made by senior parliamentary staff, as well as parliamentary relations officers and others.

The format of the seminars was half-day sessions, from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. Each seminar lasted for approximately one and a half hours, with two or three presentations following by a question and answer period. In addition, there was a section at end of the morning for an update and report on recent parliamentary developments in the Senate and the House of Commons. A continental-style breakfast was provided, and a buffet lunch was available. All seminars are held on Parliament Hill. The fees were: \$150 per seminar, or \$450 for the series of three seminars (with a free CSPG membership thrown in). A brochure was prepared and sent to all members of the CSPG, as well as to members of the PRO community. Advertisements were also placed in *The Hill Times*. The seminars were held during adjournments of the House and Senate in October, January and April.

The first seminar was held on October 16, 2002, and involved two topics: The Business of Supply (the presenters were: Brian O'Neal of the Parliamentary Research Branch, Library of Parliament, and Michael Lukyniuk, Deputy Principal Clerk , Legislative Services, House of Commons); and Private Members' Business (the presenters were: Marie-Andrée Lajoie, Clerk Assistant, House Proceedings, House of Commons, and James R. Robertson of the Parliamentary Research Branch, Library of Parliament).

The second session was held on January 15, 2003. The topics were: The Legislative Process (the panelists were: Michael Lukyniuk, Deputy Principal Clerk, Legislative Services, House of Commons, and Heather Lank, Principal Clerk, Committees and Private Legislation Directorate, The Senate of Canada); and Parliamentary Documents (the panelists were: Monique Hamilton,

Procedural Clerk, Journals Branch, House of Commons, and Catherine Green, Reference Librarian, Library of Parliament).

The third session, held on April 23, 2003, was on Committee Preparation (the panelists were: David McInnes, Vice-President, Corporate Communications, MDS Nordion; Judy Cedar, Director, Ministerial Services, Deputy Minister's Office, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and Stephen Knowles, Procedural Clerk, Committees Directorate, House of Commons); and The Senate (the panelists were: C.E.S. Franks, Professor Emeritus, Queen's University, and Charles Robert, Principal Clerk, Procedure, The Senate of Canada).

As an experiment, a bonus session was offered to participants. In June 2003, the CSPG sponsored a Brown Bag Session, an informal session focusing on recent procedural developments or trends. This, however, was not well attended.

A second series of Parliamentary Business Seminar series was offered in 2003-2004. An expanded advisory working group was established in June, and met in the autumn of 2003 to plan the seminars. Three half-day sessions were offered, again with the option of subscribing for the series or for individual sessions.

The first seminar was held on November 12, 2003. The first session was on Parliamentary Returns: Written Questions, Petitions etc.; (the panelists were: Ronald Régimbald, Coordinator, Parliamentary Returns, Privy Council Office; Lise Sanscartier, Assistant Coordinator, Parliamentary Returns, Privy Council Office; Robert Benoît, Procedural Clerk, Journals Branch, House of Commons; and Lucile McGregor, Procedural Clerk, Board of Internal Economy, House of Commons). The second session was on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, and the presentation was made by Reg Alcock, M.P. (Winnipeg South), the former chair of the Committee.

The subsequent sessions of the 2003-2004 series were scheduled for January 20, 2004 – Cabinet Directives and Public Servants before Parliamentary Committees; and April 7, 2004 – Parliament: Theory and Practice.

Approximately 75 to 100 persons attended each of the sessions, and, on balance, participants seem to enjoy and appreciate the experience.

The Parliamentary Business Seminar series appear to be a successful initiative of the CSPG. They are in keeping with the mandate of the Group to explain and inform about Parliament. The seminars seem to be filling a need in the community, and to be appreciated. They are also a source of revenue for the CSPG.

The seminars would not be possible without the expertise and support of staff of the House of Commons, the Senate and the Library, for which we are most grateful. In addition, the hard work and energy of JoAnne Cartwright and staff of the House of Commons is invaluable in making the seminars possible.

MEMBERSHIP / COMMUNICATIONS

New Look for the Web-site

In July 2003, the CSPG unveiled its new Web site, which features improved navigation; updated, timely information about its activities; the constitution; electronic versions of recent publications or recent conference materials and enhanced images. At the request of the Group, all provincial and territorial legislatures provided photos which appear on each of the site's main pages. CSPG contracted the services of Accolade Intermedia for the redesign. The address of the Group remains www.studyparliament.ca (in English) and www.etudeparlementaire.ca (in French).

The Board has considered streamlining the renewal of memberships by providing for 2 to 4 periods of membership renewal. Once a plan is finalized, members will be consulted before changes are made.

Communications to participants registered in the Parliamentary Business Seminar are now carried principally by email. Efforts are underway to have email as the principal means of communicating with our membership.

PARTNERSHIPS / LIAISON

Speaking Tour

The Canadian Study of Parliament Group, in conjunction with the association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada, continues each year to organize speaking tours at Canadian universities on the role of Parliament.

Teacher's Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy

Launched by the Speaker of the House of Commons in 1996, the Teachers' Institute is a professional development program that brings 100 teachers from across Canada to Parliament Hill for a one week "behind the scenes" seminar designed to provide teachers with a sound knowledge and understanding of Canada's parliamentary system. The Group provided a complimentary one-year membership to all educators attending the Teacher's Institute in 2003.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The CSPG organized two regional activities in 2003. The first was a panel discussion at the 2003 meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) at Dalhousie University in Halifax in June. This panel included several leading students of Parliament and the discussion centred around the methods and approaches to the study of Parliament in Canada.

In September, the Group sponsored a roundtable on the effects of Bill C-24 (campaign finance reform) at the meetings of the Atlantic Provinces Political Studies Association in St. John's. Immediately after this interesting session, the Group sponsored a reception that was attended by more than 60 political scientists and guests from the St. John's community.

Upcoming plans include a roundtable at the 2004 CPSA meetings at the University of Manitoba in June followed by a reception. This session will focus on the work of two of Canada's leading students of parliamentary government, David Smith and John Courtney.

This is my last report as President. Thank you to the CSPG membership for their continued support of our organization. Thank you to all the members who served on the Board, for their support, their commitment to the work and goals of the CSPG, their hard work on various initiatives, and their camaraderie. I especially thank JoAnne Cartwright who serves the board with energy and commitment. None of the CSPG's achievements could have been accomplished without her.

Dianne Brydon
President
February 27, 2004