



2005 ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides an overview of the CSPG's programs and activities for the period between January 2005 and February 2006.

MOVING THE ORGANIZATION AHEAD

2005 proved to be another busy year for the Canadian Study of Parliament Group. Key initiatives included organizing two major conferences in March and December, delivering a full suite of Parliamentary Business Seminars, awarding the first James R. Mallory Research Grant for the Study of Parliament, and organizing the third annual National Student Essay Award.

The CSPG's membership and Board continue to bring together a unique mix of experts and practitioners in legislative affairs. In blending theory with practice, the Group plays a vital role in encouraging understanding and debate about our political institutions.

As we look ahead to our 28th year, the CSPG will continue to seek ways to use our resources responsibly and effectively in fulfilling our mission.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Support from the House of Commons

Support provided by the House of Commons remains indispensable to the Group's work. This takes the form of an annual financial contribution, in-kind support (e.g., access to Parliamentary space for events) and staff assistance. Since 2003, the House has assigned the following part-time support: a program officer's time to continue managing logistics, administrative and financial activities; an administrative assistant's time to help with events and mail-outs; and a smaller proportion of a procedural clerk's time to assist on specific projects.

New for the upcoming year is the arrival of a Procedural Clerk from the House of Commons to oversee programs, logistics and administration of the Group.

Finances

Financial statements for the Group are presented with this report. The annual grant from the House of Commons, coupled with participant fees for the Parliamentary Business Seminars, remain the principal sources of revenue for the Group.

The financial status of the Group remains healthy. This has allowed the Group to continue its salary support to a House of Commons employee, Sophie Descary, for part-time assistance to the CSPG. This arrangement commenced during the final quarter of 2004. Sophie continues to provide tremendous service to the Group.

The Senate of Canada also generously decided to support the Group for the upcoming year with a financial contribution.

Priorities for the coming year will include improved financial planning and reporting, and endorsement of policies on sponsorship and travel claims.

Membership and Communications

Our membership, presently at 472 as of February 2006, continues to grow.

Communications activities this year focused on updating the logo and other communications materials, in order to present a more professional and polished public image for the CSPG. Our new logo, designed by Alterego Communications, was incorporated into the CSPG brochure, Web site, kit folders, banners, templates for letterhead and ads. We are currently looking into creating a template for materials related to events promotion. Our Web site continues to be an important communications vehicle in promoting our events, competitions and publications.

Communications to participants registered in the Parliamentary Business Seminars are now carried out principally by e-mail. Efforts are underway to have e-mail as the principal means of communicating with our membership.

Finally, in the coming months we will be revisiting questions related to membership, fee structures, and e-mail distribution.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

National Student Essay Competition

The essay competition, for undergraduate and graduate students across Canada, entered its third annual competition in 2005. Students were once again invited to submit an essay addressing parliament, legislatures or legislators in either English or French. For the 2005 competition, the selection committee received a total of 22 entries by the deadline of December 12, 2005. As before, the winners were selected in February. This year's selection committee was composed of Lisa Young (University of Calgary), Jonathan Malloy (Carleton University), David Docherty, (Wilfrid Laurier University), Bill Cross (Carleton University) and Luc Fortin (Table Research Branch, House of Commons).

The Committee selected an essay by Ekaterina Stepanova titled "Party discipline does not hinder good governance: Allowing free votes in the House of Commons is not a good idea for reform" as the best undergraduate essay and Rhiannon Stromberg's essay entitled "An Opportunity for Change in the Functioning of Legislatures: Examining the Policy Field Committee System in Saskatchewan" as the best graduate student essay.

J.R. Mallory Research Grant

The competition for the first James R. Mallory Research Grant for the Study of Parliament (\$10,000) was advertised in the fall of 2004 and attracted 20 applications from a broad range of qualified candidates, among them journalists, academics, researchers and students. The deadline for applications was February 1, 2005. The CSPG was pleased to include on the selection committee Charles Mallory, son of the late James R. Mallory, in whose honour the research grant is named. At the annual meeting of the CSPG in April 2005, the winning candidate was announced – Professor Don Desserud, University of New Brunswick, Saint John campus.

Professor Desserud's research essay, entitled "The Separation of Powers and Responsible Government in the Canadian Parliamentary System" is due in September 2006, at which point the CSPG expects to launch the second round of competition for the research grant.

Conference Publication

On March 11, 2005, the CSPG held a conference on “Canada: A Democratic Audit.” The co-sponsor of the conference was the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University. Professor Bill Cross, director of the Centre, spearheaded a ten-volume audit project, each volume dedicated to an institutional feature of the Canadian system of government and politics. At the conference, the results of the audit were presented and debated. The Parliamentary Interns in attendance took notes which formed the basis for the Conference publication sent to CSPG members. The publication, like the conference, is entitled “Canada: A Democratic Audit.”

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

2005 March Conference

The Group partnered with the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University for a one day conference in Ottawa on March 11th. The conference focused on the work of the Democratic Audit project and was a follow-up to the 2002 conference that launched the Audit. Several CSPG Board members reported on volumes that they have written for this project, including Lisa Young (Advocacy Groups), David Docherty (Legislatures), Graham White (Cabinet and First Ministers), Jennifer Smith (Federalism) and Bill Cross (Political Parties). The keynote address was delivered by Senator Hugh Segal, then President of the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

2005 December Conference

In December, the Group held a one day conference on the local dimensions of federal politics. A large crowd gathered in the West Block for sessions on party candidate nominations, local campaign effects and the constituency work of Members of Parliament. Several of the presentations took a comparative perspective including those of Dr. David Denver from the University of Lancaster in the UK and Dr. Michael Marsh from Trinity College in Dublin. The keynote address was delivered by Marian Dewar, former MP and mayor of Ottawa.

Parliamentary Business Seminars

The CSPG has organized seminars on topical issues relating to the Canadian Parliament and parliamentary process for parliamentary relations officers and others since January 1997. In 2002, a more systematic approach was adopted, with the development of an annual series of three seminars running from the autumn to the spring entitled “Parliamentary Business Seminars.” The 2004-05 and the 2005-06 series marked the third and fourth series, respectively.

These half-day seminars are held on Parliament Hill, and are usually structured as two separate discussion panels related to the business of Parliament. In addition, there is a section at the end of the seminar for an update and report on recent parliamentary developments. The fees are \$150 per seminar, or \$450 for the series of three seminars (with a free CSPG membership). A continental-style breakfast and buffet lunch are included.

Attendance at the Parliamentary Business Seminars has remained reasonably high and consistent – typically over 100 people attend each one. For the 2005-06 series, 61 people subscribed to the entire series.

The 2004-05 series began with a seminar on “Looking Ahead to a Minority Parliament,” on November 10, 2004. The two remaining seminars for this reporting period were on January 19, 2005, “Officers of Parliament”; and on April 27, 2005, “Who Does What: Organizing the Work of the Two Chambers and their Committees.”

The presenters at the January 19, 2005 seminar included Louis Massicotte, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Montreal; David Smith, Emeritus Professor, Department of Political Studies, University of Saskatchewan; Micheline Rondeau-Parent, Director, Communications and Parliamentary Liaison, Office of the Ethics Commissioner; Dyane Adam, Commissioner of Official Languages; and the Hon. John M. Reid, Q.C., Information Commissioner of Canada. The participants at the April 27, 2005 seminar included: Gordon Barnhart, University Secretary, University of Saskatchewan; Jerry Yanover, Senior Legislative Counsellor, Office of the Government House Leader; and Annie Desnoyers, Coordinator of Strategy and Parliamentary Affairs, Office of the Bloc Quebecois House Leader; Janelle Feldstein, Chief of Staff, Office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; Theresa Kavanagh, Assistant, Office of the NDP Whip; and James R. Robertson, Principal, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament.

The 2005-06 series of Seminars began on November 9, 2005, with a seminar entitled "A Day in the Life of the Chamber". The presenters for the first panel were Jeffrey LeBlanc, Procedural Clerk, Table Research Branch, House of Commons; and Lucile McGregor, Procedural Clerk, Board of Internal Economy, House of Commons. The presenters for the second panel were Blair Armitage, Principal Clerk, Legislative Support Office, The Senate of Canada; and Charles Robert, Principal Clerk, Procedure, The Senate of Canada.

The second seminar of the 2005-06 Parliamentary Business Seminars was held January 25, 2006, on "Private Members' Business and Lobbying". The presenters for the first panel on Private Members' Business were: Terence Moore, Procedural Clerk, Private Members' Business Office, House of Commons; The Hon. Don Boudria, P.C., Former Parliamentarian; and Hubert Sacy, Director General, Éduc'alcool. The second panel, on the topic of Lobbying was made up of Leo Duguay, President, Government Relations Institute of Canada; Goldy Hyder, Senior Vice President, Hill & Knowlton; and Robbin Tourangeau, Vice President, Public Policy & Government Relations, Imagine Canada.

The third seminar in this series will be held on April 19, 2006, on the topic "Legislating: From Ideas to Acts" and registration is well underway.

The Parliamentary Business Seminars continue to fill a need that is not otherwise met. They help fulfill the mandate of the CSPG to explain and inform about Parliament, and assist in raising the profile of the organization. They continue to be a successful initiative of the CSPG, and are an important source of revenue for the Group.

PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Speaking Tour Report 2005-2006

The Speaking Tour program, established in 1988, is a joint initiative of the CSPG and the Canadian Clerks-at-the-Table Association. The CSPG plays a liaison role in arranging for federal and provincial Clerks to speak to students at Canadian universities about the role of Parliament and the Westminster model of government.

The annual Speaking Tour call letter was sent to the chairs of all Political Science Departments in May 2005, as per the new timetable agreed to last year. In total, 12 requests were received from 11 different professors at 10 universities. Of these, one professor cancelled the request; and a mutually convenient date could not be found for a second.

The remaining ten requests were filled by four Table Officers: one from the Senate; two from the House of Commons; and one from the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (professors request a speaker from either the federal or the provincial/territorial level, depending on the focus of their course).

In all cases, the feedback on this year's presentations was excellent, from both the professors and the presenters.

The legislative assemblies assumed all the costs involved for travel and accommodation. Neither CSPG nor the Association of Clerks at the Table was asked to contribute financially.

Annual Professional Development Seminar for the Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada

The Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada (CATS) held its annual professional development seminar in Gatineau and Ottawa from August 1 to 5, 2005. As a first time experiment, the CSPG Board proposed to the CATS executive that a presentation be made during one of the seminar's business sessions by CSPG representatives on a topic of interest to parliamentary Clerks.

The proposal was accepted by the CATS executive, and a workshop was held on Wednesday, August 3, 2005 on the topic of electoral reform and its effect on parliamentary procedures and administration. Presentations were made by Leslie Seidle and Bill Cross on the electoral reform initiatives in BC, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island while Jackie Steele provided an overview of her work on women and proportional representation systems, which was followed by questions and comments from the Clerks. At the conclusion of the business session, the three presenters attended a conference luncheon and had the opportunity to continue the discussions informally as well as mingle with seminar delegates.

Given the generally positive response to this initiative, similar partnerships may be explored with CATS at future professional development seminars, perhaps with the format of having a presentation done jointly by a representative of CSPG and a representative of CATS.

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 understanding of Canada's parliamentary system. As in previous years, the Group provided a complimentary one-year membership to all educators attending the Teacher's Institute in 2005. Copies of the Group's CD-Rom of publications were distributed as gifts at the closing dinner of the program and will be mailed to the 600 alumni from past Institutes.

Involvement in Political Science Association Conferences

The CSPG took part formally in two of the annual political science association meetings this year, including sponsoring a reception at the Atlantic Canadian Political Science Association held in at St. Francis Xavier University and organizing a panel at the Canadian Political Science Association meeting at the University of Western Ontario.

The CPSA panel was organized around the theme of "The place of Parliamentary Government in Political Science courses." Participants included political scientists, graduate students and a secondary school teacher. The panel was well attended and drew many interesting questions and observations from attendees, including undergraduate students in political science.

The CSPG also established links with the Société québécoise de science politique. The SQSP advertised the CSPG essay contest on its Web site which provided the event with more exposure and publicity. In May 2005, the Secretary of our Board made a presentation about the Group at the SQSP conference at the University of Ottawa.

SPECIAL THANKS

The CSPG relies heavily on the support of staff in the Table Research Branch of the House of Commons. The following individuals have played invaluable roles in supporting the Group's activities over the past year: JoAnne Cartwright (CSPG Executive Secretary), Bev Isles (Deputy Principal Clerk), Sophie Descary (Administrative Assistant), and Gary Sokolyk (Procedural Clerk).

After five years of loyal service to the CSPG, JoAnne will be shifting her attention to other responsibilities with the House of Commons. JoAnne has served the CSPG with energy and distinction over a period of considerable expansion in the Groups' activities – for which she is largely responsible. Thank you, JoAnne! At the same time, we are pleased to welcome Miriam Burke, a Procedural Clerk with 15 years of experience with the House of Commons, to her new role with the CSPG.

Thank you to all the members of the Board who, in a volunteer capacity, dedicate considerable time and energy in fulfilling the goals of the CSPG. On behalf of the Group, I would sincerely like to thank departing Board members - Jamie Robertson, Christine Trauttmansdorff, Antonine Campbell, Bill Cross and Jacques Gagnon - for the dedicated service and sage advice they have brought to the organization.

Jeff Heynen
President