

POST-ELECTION SEMINAR PARLIAMENT OF ST LUCIA REPORT SUMMARY

30 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2021



IMPACT

Through the exchange of good practice and a range of workshops, this seminar aimed to contribute towards a more effective and inclusive Parliament of St Lucia.

OUTCOMES

- 1) Strengthen technical skills of new and returning Members of the House of Assembly and Senate, to deliver their parliamentary responsibilities effectively and efficiently.
- 2) Increase understanding of the purpose and operation of committees.
- 3) Strengthen the links between the parliaments of the UK and St Lucia through the mutually beneficial sharing of knowledge and experience between members of both legislatures.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Parliament of St Lucia invited the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to facilitate a Post-Election Seminar. The programme was delivered over three days by a cross-party delegation from the UK Parliament.

The programme followed St Lucia's General Election of June 2021 and was designed and delivered as a partnership between the parliaments of the UK and St Lucia. We allocated space in the programme for the mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences to foster a peer-to-peer learning approach.

The UK delegation was in St Lucia from 29 November to 3 December 2021. In addition to the parliamentary programme, the delegation conducted bilateral meetings on the impact of COVID-19, sustainable development and regional issues in the Eastern Caribbean.

UK DELEGATES

- Lord Randall of Uxbridge
- Kerry McCarthy MP
- Layla Moran MP
- Gagan Mohindra MP
- Jessica Mulley

Parliament of St Lucia



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POST-ELECTION SEMINAR

PARLIAMENT OF ST LUCIA

FULL REPORT

30 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2021

GENERAL ELECTION

The St Lucia General Election was held on 26 July 2021. Of a total of 17 seats in the House of Assembly, the United Workers Party lost nine of their eleven seats, and the St Lucia Labour Party (SLP) came to power with a large majority of 13 seats, gaining 7 additional seats. Two independent members were also elected.

Eleven Senators were appointed after the election as follows:

- 6 St Lucia Labour Party
- 3 United Workers Party
- 2 Independent

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

In the House of Assembly 2 women were elected out of a total of 17 seats.

In the Senate 5 women were appointed out of a total of 11 seats.



The programme (pictured above) provided an overview of the operation of the Parliaments of the UK and St Lucia, with in-depth consideration of how to influence legislation, how to balance a parliamentarian's commitments, diversity and inclusion, and the functioning of committees.

Participants emphasised the importance of treating legislatures with the “appropriate seriousness” they deserve. They discussed how all parliaments need to keep evolving and members always need to keep learning.

They discussed the variety of opportunities in parliament to influence legislation, not only in the stages of a Bill but also via other parliamentary processes such as pre and post-legislative scrutiny and the reports of Select Committees. There was also a call for “genuine debate” in the Chamber rather than reading pre-prepared speeches.

Members from both parliaments shared their experiences of balancing and prioritising their commitments. Those elected to the lower house were in the “hot seat” and need to deliver for their constituents. More experienced parliamentarians urged newer colleagues not to neglect constituency commitments but to be present in the community regularly and always to be there in times of crisis.

Diversity and inclusion in parliaments are essential in reflecting democratic values and producing better legislation. St Lucian participants shared how their Standing Orders need to be updated from the male pronouns “He” to more inclusive language. It is also vital that parliaments reach out to younger people to engage them in the work of parliament and increase public understanding.

The women parliamentarians met privately to discuss the opportunities and challenges of serving in public office as a woman and forthcoming legislation in St Lucia to tackle domestic violence.



Discussion underway in the Post-Election Seminar.

Committees are a crucial part of parliamentary scrutiny. UK delegates explained the ways in the UK Parliament that parliamentarians must work cross-party to achieve objectives, particularly in Select Committees. When watching video clips of committee hearings to explore different questioning techniques, it was difficult to distinguish whether a Member was on the Government or Opposition side due to the cross-party collaboration. Participants implemented their learning in a committee questioning role-play scenario.

RESULTS

During the programme, there was a high level of participation with 20 of the 28 members from both Houses attending.

Pre- and Post-Assessment Forms quantitatively assessed the outcomes of the programme. All respondents stated that the programme was relevant to their role. All respondents said it met expectations, with over half saying it exceeded expectations. Participants rated their level of understanding of the subject areas covered by the programme. Most respondents scored their understanding as ‘moderate’ before the programme, and by the end, the majority scored their understanding as ‘good’.

Overall, there was a recorded increase of knowledge of 36%, with the area of committees showing the highest improvement. In the feedback session at the end of the programme, they also shared how much they appreciated the opportunity to increase their understanding and share experiences.

CPA UK IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

CPA UK has facilitated a range of programmes in the Eastern Caribbean region in recent years. In early 2020, CPA UK hosted a regional workshop on Public Accounts Committees in Trinidad and Tobago, and a UK delegation undertook bilateral trips to Barbados and Grenada.

Over the past two years, most Eastern Caribbean legislatures have participated in CPA UK's annual virtual programme for Caribbean Clerks, in addition to many multilateral events on issues such as climate change and trade agreements.

The programme was held during the week that the closest island neighbour of St Lucia, Barbados, became a republic. Throughout the programme, the issue of St Lucia and the monarchy was discussed, alongside broader questions on the need for constitutional reform, including whether the Caribbean Court of Justice should replace the British Privy Council as their final court of appeal.

BILATERAL MEETINGS

The UK delegation engaged in several bilateral meetings to increase their understanding of issues affecting St Lucia and the Eastern Caribbean region.

The delegation met with Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Ernest Hilaire MP to understand the impact of COVID-19 on public health and the economy. Hon. Hilaire described how St Lucians had struggled through the pandemic, with an increase in mental health issues and incidents of domestic violence. The national vaccination rate at the time of the visit was around 30%, and the Government aimed to balance public safety with economic recovery. The tourism sector was restarting, and the hotels that were open were operating at 90% occupancy.

The UK delegation visited Soufriere to understand sustainable development initiatives in that region. The Soufriere region includes the two iconic Piton mountains and the volcanic Sulphur Springs. The delegation met with a range of local organisations. The Soufriere Regional Development Foundation explained how they were set up in 1990 to support agriculture and tourism, with the revenue generated invested into local services such as schools. They support ecotourism from hotels and developed the jetty to receive cruise ships. They now directly employ 180 staff, in addition to the beneficial knock-on effect on the local economy. The Soufriere Marine Management Association ensures the sustainable use and development of the local marine areas by those in the fishing and tourism sectors.

“
“I learnt a great deal
from my colleagues
and the UK.”

“Thanks for the
wonderful
exchange.”

The delegation learned more about regional collaboration in a meeting with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The OECS is an eleven-member organisation headquartered in St Lucia. They shared that between member states: our “differences are petty compared to opportunities together.” They were interested in the experience of the UK after Brexit and the issue of engaging the public in regional integration initiatives.

The OECS drives a wide range of activities, including regional procurement of medicines and supporting young entrepreneurs in the creative economy. Staff shared that “what we need in the Caribbean is imagination” and described the range of projects ongoing to care for the local environment, including the cultivation of sea moss on ropes, the hunting of the invasive Lionfish species and the sustainable harvesting of frankincense.

The delegation was also delighted to meet young St Lucians who had been recipients of a Chevening Scholarship. These scholarships allow young people to further their careers by studying in the UK. It was fascinating to meet and hear the views of these young leaders in St Lucian society.

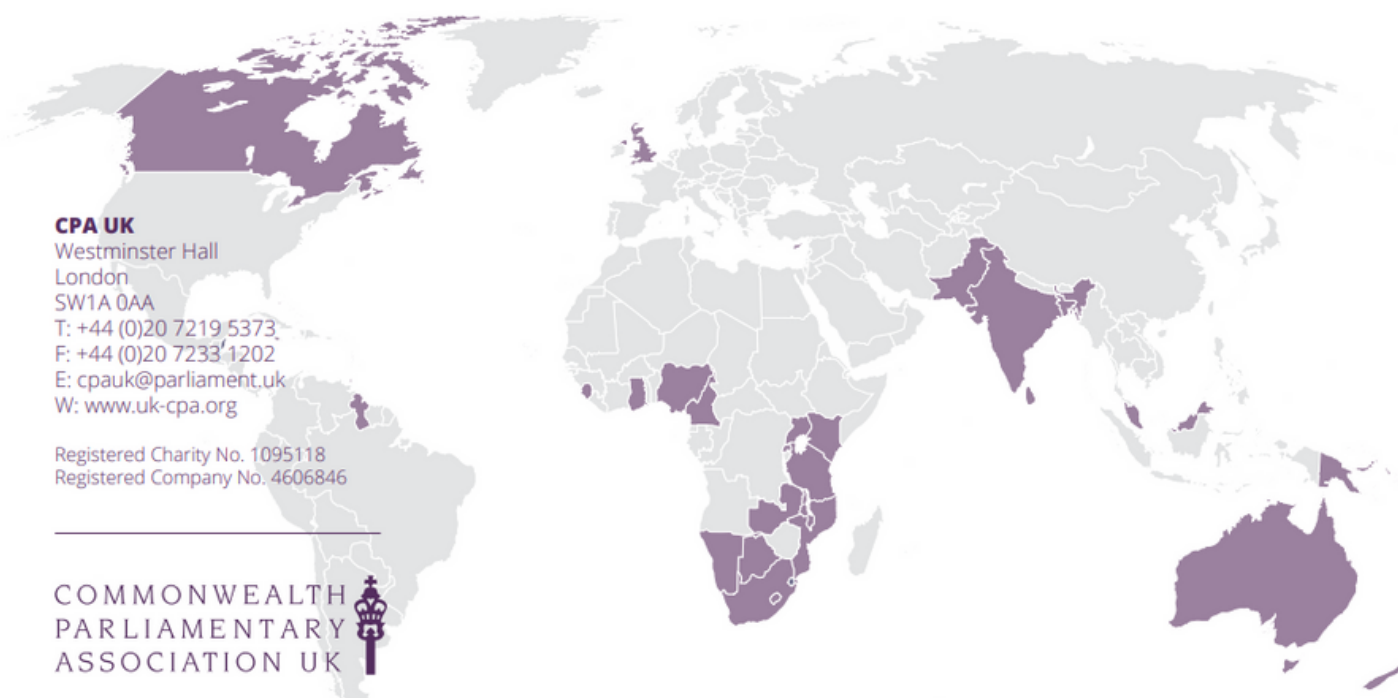
CPA UK looks forward to continued engagement with the Parliament of St Lucia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CPA UK would like to acknowledge the hospitality and partnership of the Parliament of St Lucia, especially the Presiding Officers, the Hon. Claudius J. Julius, Speaker of the House of Assembly, and Senator the Hon. Stanley Felix, President of the Senate. CPA UK is grateful for the support of Prime Minister Hon. Philip J. Pierre MP gave to this programme. We are thankful for the assistance of the British High Commissioner for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and the Resident British Commissioner for St Lucia and their respective staff teams.



The view over Castries, St Lucia.



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