



Report from the Study Visit to Canada for Members of the Parliament of Bangladesh

October 17-21, 2005

Prepared by the Parliamentary Centre

From October 17-21, 2005, the Parliamentary Centre organized a legislative capacity-building study mission in Ottawa for a delegation of Bangladeshi Parliamentarians at the request of the Bangladeshi Parliament and the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), Asia Branch. The delegation was led by Hon. Mr. Al-Haj Syed Wahidul Alam, Member of Parliament, Whip & Member of House Committee, and consisted of fifteen members (twelve MPs and three senior staff). As agreed, the main purpose was defined as providing the delegates with an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge and experience on the rules of procedure and practices of the Canadian Parliament in performing various functions such as legislative management and oversight.

During the visit, the Bangladeshi Members of Parliament were exposed to the Canadian parliamentary system primarily from the institutional perspective. They gained an enriched understanding of how various institutional components, such as political parties, committees and staff institutions, operated and interacted in practice to support the function of the overall system. They also learned the practical procedures for individual MPs to take part in the parliamentary process. The learning process was fulfilled through an opportunity to meet with a variety of parliamentarians and officials from the Canadian Parliament, who, as identified in details in the program, included Speaker from both Houses, Committee Chairs, individual parliamentarians as well as senior parliamentary staff. In order to present a picture as accurate and balanced as possible, parliamentarians of different partisan affiliations and officials from both chambers, i.e. the House of Commons and Senate were invited to bring different perspectives from their experience working within diverse contexts.

Findings from the Study Visit

The Context of the Canadian Political System

The outset of the program was marked by an orientation session, where Ms. Amelita Armit, Director of Asia Programs, provided a brief overview of the function,

structure and procedures of the Canadian parliamentary system situated within the context of the overall democratic governance process. Her presentation captured a snapshot of how key aspects of the parliamentary democracy such as elections, committee structures, the legislative process, accountability mechanisms are practiced in Canada. This was followed with discussions on the different dynamics and operating procedures of the House of Commons and Senate, particularly in terms of their mandates, representation, composition, and partisan competition. Ms. Armit drew special attention to the current situation of minority government and its unusual impacts on the political dynamics in the parliament. She also outlined the constitutional definition of federal and provincial powers and shed insight into the practical implications of these power arrangements on the relationships between the two jurisdictions. It was noted that in the federalist context, legislatures or even individual parliamentarians at the federal and provincial levels have to collaborate closely in many policy areas in order to meet all aspects of the needs of Canadians.

The meetings with the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons revealed how business in the chamber was managed on daily basis. The Honourable Daniel Hays, Speaker of the Senate, provided an overview of the way Senators were appointed and how they assume the role to represent the interests of different regions of Canada. It was noted that the Senate, often called “the Chamber of Second Thought”, had the luxury to be able to focus on longer-term perspectives of policy issues due to less concerns about periodical elections and competitive partisanship. Speaker Hays reflected upon the trends and challenges in the latest reform initiatives in Canada to reset the composition of seats in the Senate in order to reflect better proportional representation of the population of different regions. He also commented on the positive impact of the minority government to empower small political parties in the legislative process.

The Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons, provided an overview of membership and procedures of the House of Commons and particularly elaborated on his observation of the impacts of partisanship in debates in the House. When asked how the Speaker should deal with party relations in the partisan reality, Speaker Milliken suggested a neutral approach because of the nature of the speaker’s position. Speaker Milliken brought up some practical examples to demonstrate how political neutrality could be achieved in his work, which included respect for the equal right of minority members to request debates, disengagement from caucus activities of any party and detachment from political debate during elections.

The observation of the Question Period of the Canadian Parliament interested the Bangladeshi MPs. Their feedback indicated that they had acquired some intuitive insight into the mechanisms and procedures by which the opposition parties held the government answerable for different policy decisions. They believed that many practices and methods, such as public observation and media exposure, could be helpful to improve the transparency of policy debates and accountability of government decisions.

The Legislative Process of the Canadian Parliament

The delegation met with two senior procedural clerks of both the House of Commons and the Senate to capture an overview of the process by which laws are drafted, reviewed, debated, amended and adopted. The visit was accompanied by discussions on how the Standing Orders and parliamentary procedures guide this process. It was demonstrated that a legislative bill had to pass three readings at both houses in order to become an effective law. It was noted that second reading at the House of Commons, which takes place at the Committee level, was the stage in the legislative process where most scrupulous review and debate was undertaken and most substantive amendments were made. It was mentioned that the first reading was intended mainly to introduce the principles and main ideas of a bill and the third reading was intended to report on the results of the committee review back to the plenary for final approval.

The Bangladeshi MPs asked if opposition members would have a chance to vote against a government bill when it was introduced. The Canadian procedural clerks responded that government bills were normally kept confidential up until the day of their introduction on the floor. Therefore, it would be difficult for opposition members to debate the bill in the first reading because the first reading was usually the occasion to get familiar with the content of a bill. It was explained that, for this same reason, an interval of a few days was usually given before the committee review commences in order to allow members to familiarize themselves with the bill.

Mr. Charles Robert, the Principal Clerk of Procedure from the Senate, drew comparisons between the procedures of the House of Commons and the Senate and analysed the linkages between the two houses in the legislative process. He noted that the legislative powers of the two chambers were symmetric except for the prerogative of the House of Commons to initiate bills that introduced budget or imposed taxation. However, given that there was less concern about time factors and partisan confrontation, the Senate tended to undertake more specialised and thorough studies of the content of a bill and rarely saw time used by the opposition as leverage to revolt against the government agenda.

Mr. Robert also underscored that procedures at various stages in the legislative process were less clear-cut and rigid at the Senate than at the House of Commons. For example, in the Senate process, amendments arising from the committee stage can be defeated at the report stage without nullifying the entire bill, whereas in the case of the House of Commons, any changes to the amendments at the report stage would defeat the whole bill. Therefore, Senators have the liberty to make new inputs even at the report stage whereas it is unlikely for MPs to do the same. In terms of the relationship between the two houses, it was noted that the Senate rarely voted formally against a bill passed by the House of Commons but rather would send a message recommending reconsideration.

Strengthening the Legislative and Oversight Role of Parliamentarians

The visits with individual MPs and Senators demonstrated that Parliamentarians, from the government and opposition alike, had important mandates to fulfill beyond defending their partisanship. Mr. Deepak Obhrai, an opposition member of the Canadian Parliament, underscored the role of parliamentarians to participate actively in the legislative debates and make constructive inputs in the content of the bills. He noted that parliamentary committees are important venues for members from different parties to sit together and refine the content of the legislative bills in a constructive manner. By putting aside partisan differences, Canadian parliamentarians believed in a collegial environment to prevent political biases from dominating committee decisions.

Mr. John Williams, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, expounded upon another fundamental function of parliamentarians: to hold the government accountable for its expenditures. Steven Langdon, Director of the Africa Programs of the Parliamentary Centre and a former MP of Canada, shed some insights into the essential role of parliamentarians in strengthening oversight on policy-based issues, with a specific reference to budget oversight in the poverty reduction process. While Bangladeshi MPs mentioned that the opposition in the Bangladesh Parliament usually played an active role in oversight, Canadian speakers believed that it was in the interests of both opposition and government members to play an equally dedicated role in scrutinizing the public expenditures. Bangladesh MPs were encouraged to effect concrete and decisive institutional changes in order to secure more transparency and accountability from the government.

Mr. Williams drew specific attention to the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption, of which he serves as the chair, as a venue for parliamentarians from across the world to unite behind the cause to defend public interests against corruption and to build result-based oversight capacity. He encouraged interested Bangladeshi MPs to tap into the resources and expertise of their international peers through this network.

The Representation of Constituencies in Action

Strengthening the representative role of parliamentarians was a recurring theme throughout the discussions with a number of Canadian MPs. Mr. Deepak Obhrai emphasized the increasing possibility for individual members to assert an independent agenda and to table petitions on behalf of their constituencies in the context of minority government. Canadian MPs provided the delegation with some important lessons learned from their first-hand experience in connecting with constituencies and representing their interests. For example, Mr. Norman Sterling, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Province, recommended that, when choosing local issues to address, parliamentarians take a more selective, realistic and result-based approach instead of pursuing too many targets at the same time.

The power division under Canadian federalism required that MPs and officials from different jurisdictions communicate and collaborate with each other in order to respond more effectively to issues of common concern to their constituencies. Mr. Norman Sterling advocated a model to support the development of local communities through mobilizing all stakeholders. The engagement and participatory approach proved successful in his recent attempt to convince the government to fund the renovation of dilapidated schools in his constituency.

It was noted that constituency offices of parliamentarians performed the essential functions to maintain connections with constituents on daily basis. Two important roles of constituency offices, according to Canadian MPs, were to maintain a visible presence of the MP and to respond to the needs and requests of residents from local constituencies. The delegation were particularly interested in learning that each Canadian MP was provided with a certain amount of budget to cover expenditures of their constituency offices, including staff time.

The media were commonly regarded as an important tool that could enable them to reach out to their communities more effectively. When asked by the delegation how to deal with the media, Mr. Norman Sterling attached importance to his name being associated in the press positively with voice of advocacy on high-profile public issues, which he believed to be a more effective way to build up political credibility than one-on-one contacts with his ever-expanding constituency. Mr. Deepak Obhrai, in his meeting earlier, drew special attention to the growing importance of the ethnic media in communicating with ethnic minorities in his constituency, which was characterized by strong cultural diversity.

Institutionalizing Oversight at the Committee Level

Some practical insights were provided to illustrate how accountability and oversight were rooted in the structure and process of parliamentary committees. Findings from the meeting with a few Committee chairs and clerks indicated that the structure and activities of parliamentary committees were well geared toward strengthening oversight on the bureaucracy. It was noted that committees of the House of Commons, with few exceptions, were generally aligned one on one to the government departments and committees in the Senate were structured around policy areas by theme. The chair of the Public Accounts Committee is required by the Standing Order to be an opposition member and a few more committees were also chaired by opposition parties in the current context of the minority parliament.

For example, Mr. John Williams noted that the public accounts committee, like all other committees, met in public and made proceedings accessible on the parliamentary website. An open committee environment, as many Canadian speakers believed, not only has kept the public informed in the oversight process, but also has given politicians more credibility among the public for their effort to scrutinize the use of public money. The Bangladesh delegation agreed with Mr. Williams's argument that the parliamentary committees in Bangladesh should make attempts to open up the committee process over time.

By comparing the committee systems in Bangladesh and Canada, the delegation was impressed to learn that Cabinet Ministers in Canada did not sit on committees and, hence, could exert very little direct influence on the Committee agenda. The delegation was also exposed to hearings as a mechanism to hold ministers and senior civil servants answerable to the parliament for their policy decisions and expenditures. Among others, they showed considerable interest in the fact that ministers had the obligation to appear before committees and respond to inquiries raised by committee members. The delegation also learned about the role of the Parliamentary Secretary, who was an elected member assigned to assist Ministers with parliamentary affairs. It was explained that one of the key mandates associated with the position was to respond to parliamentary inquiries when ministers were absent.

Committee studies were regarded to be an important way for committees to exercise their oversight and representative duties of inquiring, reviewing and making recommendations on matters assigned to the executive branch. The delegation were informed that committees of both houses had freedom to initiate studies on almost any subjects in addition to the studies commissioned by the house, despite the fact that the mandate of studies tended to be less partisan and more forward-looking in the case of Senate committees. It was noted that recommendations from a committee study are generally advisory and have no binding force on the government. When asked how to ensure the government take committee recommendations seriously, several Canadian speakers confirmed that government was required to respond within the given period and usually took constructive actions because of the high stake of losing political credibility for ignoring committee recommendations.

The delegation learned a number of methods to build information linkages between committees of the two chambers in order to avoid duplication of effort to conduct policy studies. It was told that reports of one committee were posted on the website of the Parliament for all other committees to access and analyse. There are several joint committees of the Senate and the House of Commons where members and Senators can conduct joint study on matters of mutual interest. The members and Senators from the same party would also have opportunities to share information and exchange learning experiences at Party Caucus meetings.

Consultation and Outreach of Committees

The Bangladesh delegation were exposed to the experience of committees in initiating citizen input into policy development and in undertaking hearings in the legislative process. It was mentioned that 400-500 witnesses appeared before Senate committees each year and many more appeared before House of Commons committees. Canadian speakers, such as Ms. Judi Longfield and Dr. Heather Lank, defined the incentive to engage citizens in the parliamentary process not only in terms of giving an equal chance for political voices not resonant with government policy positions, but also in terms of preventing the interests of minorities from

being marginalized, which is particularly true with the mission of the Senate. The experience of Dr. Lank also suggested an extra benefit of consultation from the perspective of public relations: after seeing concrete results of their participation in the decision-making process, witnesses would generally correct misperceptions of the political process and become active supporters of citizen engagement.

A few Canadian speakers shed insights into how committees managed various stages of the consultation process to ensure the overall representativeness and conclusiveness of findings. It was noted that nomination of witnesses was usually solicited broadly from political parties, parliamentary researchers and individual citizens. Witnesses invited to appear before the committee are not limited to just government officials but also include civil society organizations or individual citizens. It was also noted that, in order to ensure an equal opportunity for citizens of different financial capacity to be engaged, Committees usually cover all travel expenses for witnesses to come to hearings. Senate committees usually put few limits on the time of hearings and witnesses appearing before Senate committees have the luxury of giving a rather complete account of their views or positions.

It was mentioned that, when considered as necessary, committees also travelled outside Ottawa to reach out to the general public and conduct field studies with the impacted communities and individuals. Dr. Steven Langdon spoke highly of the example of pre-budget consultations, in which the Standing Committee on Finance of the House of Commons travelled across the country once every year to gauge the public opinion of different regions toward the fiscal plan of the government released at the beginning of the budgeting process.

Although committee members generally appreciate opportunities to increase their visibility in communities, the need for making logistical arrangements for committee outreach could put onerous pressure on the limited financial and human resources of a committee. Ms. Judi Longfield, who has been serving as the chair of several committees, highlighted the cost implications and administrative difficulties in the arrangement of logistics, i.e. interpretation, accommodation, transportation, etc. For practical reasons and to save costs, it was noted that committees increasingly looked into the new methods offered by information technology, such as video conference, wherever possible as opposed to exclusive reliance on face-to-face communication. Bangladeshi MPs were encouraged to take advantage of new technology in order to reach out to communities at a reduced cost.

Professionalizing Staff Support to Facilitate Committee Work

It was learned that each committee was assigned some staff with different types of expertise and clearly-defined roles to supported committees in their daily work. Committee clerks managed the procedural aspect of committee business and researchers were assigned by the Library of Parliament to provide specialized know-how on the substance. Ms. Marie-Andree Lajoie, Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons, described the functions of committee staff as mostly facilitating. She and other speakers outlined some key responsibilities of committee staff, such as

suggesting topics for committees to study, providing policy briefing and summary of law bills, preparing agenda, transcripts and minutes of all meetings, consolidating comments of members in legislative review into legislative amendments, suggesting a list of witnesses to call, reporting on findings from hearings or consultation initiatives, etc.

It was recognized by most Canadian MPs that the improvement of expert advice on the Rules of Procedure and on parliamentary practices is crucial to enable committee members to explore options for action. Summarized analysis on the contents of documents and working papers was believed to enable committees to focus their agendas on relevant and important issues. It was mentioned that there was strong awareness among committees of the importance of various procedural and research support and concrete tools and guidelines had been developed to help staff provide their support more effectively.

In response to a question raised by the delegation regarding the staff management policy, clerks of both the House of Commons and the Senate noted that committee clerks rarely stayed with a single committee but usually served different committees on a rotational basis. The reason for doing so is to prevent individual clerks from carrying too much corporate memory to the next committee. However, it was mentioned that staff changes seldom occurred too frequently in the middle of a certain parliamentary session, especially in the case that the committee chair and staff have a comfortable working relationship. Replacement decisions are most often made in a three or four-year cycle and at the conjuncture when a new session of a parliament commences and new committees form.

The Auditor General was referred to as a very important staff institution of the Parliament. Mr. John Williams mentioned that the Public Accounts Committee would not be able to perform its scrutiny function properly without the assistance of Auditor General to conduct a variety of periodical and special audits. The delegation was interested in learning that the Auditor General of Canada was appointed by the Parliament and reported to the Public Accounts Committee. Mr. Williams argued that the functions of audit and bookkeeping should be assigned to separate entities and the Auditor General should be authorized to work independently of the government and to enjoy unrestricted access to government-held information.

Improving Administrative Services for Individual Parliamentarians

The delegation learned about a range of in-house services offered to individual parliamentarians by the Canadian Parliament. As part of the overview of the research and information services provided by the Library of Parliament, Mr. Hugh Finsten emphasized the conveniently accessible, specialized, non-partisan and confidential features of the research services being provided to individual parliamentarians. He also explained the use of information technology used to deliver web-based information and knowledge to potential clients in the Parliament through the parliamentary intranet. When asked for a rationale behind the principle

to maintain political neutrality in the services provided to MPs, Mr. Finsten noted the intention was to gain trust from MPs working in a partisan environment.

The session with Ms. Janice Hilchie, Principal Clerk of Information Management, described various orientation programs and training resources provided to newly elected Members of Parliament. Her presentation went through a variety of orientation programs designed to familiarize new MPs with their roles and responsibilities, the procedures of the House, essentials of their daily work and resources available for them on the Hill. She outlined the types of information disseminated as part of the exposure program, ranging from briefing on the establishment of constituency offices, to guidance on the hiring of staff, to analysis of impact on family life. Ms. Hilchie stressed that the orientation program took an adaptive approach to address the learning needs of parliamentarians in their first period of service. A variety of means were employed to facilitate the learning process, such as panel discussions with experienced MPs, seminars on procedures and policy issues, client-tailored reference information, one-on-one meetings with service providers, service fairs, website and information centres.

Bangladeshi MPs were interested in knowing the budgetary support for the staffing needs of individual parliamentarians. It was explained that individual MPs usually have staff support at both the Parliament Office and the Constituency Office. Hiring decisions such as the number and choice of staff are left to the discretion of each individual member based on the fixed budget allocated to support his/her operations. When asked to elaborate on the support to the family life of MPs, Ms. Hilchie mentioned that spouses associations played an active role in providing orientations for the spouse of newly elected MPs and communicating their expectations to the parliamentary services.

Lessons Learned from the Study Visit

At the debriefing session with the Parliamentary Centre, the delegation commented highly on the productiveness of the exchanges with their counterparts from the Canadian Parliament. Bangladeshi MPs indicated that they acquired knowledge and skill useful for fulfilling their mandates, particularly in terms of performing their representation and oversight functions. The meetings with the members and staff of various committees of the Canadian Parliament were considered to have provided helpful techniques and expertise for Bangladesh committees in strengthening their linkage with constituencies. Bangladeshi MPs also appreciated the opportunities to exchange experiences with their Canadian colleagues regarding some practical aspects of their daily operation, such as managing public and media relations in their constituencies and addressing the development needs of their local communities. These achievements essentially result from the joint effort of all parties involved in the preparation and implementation of the visit:

1. Active information exchanges and idea sharing starting at very early stage of the program design have enabled us to build up a client-oriented program tailored to the interest of the participants. The coordinators of both UNDP and the

Bangladesh Parliament, particularly Dr. A.T.M. Obaidullah, have made persistent efforts to assess the needs of participants and to identify key issues of interest to address through the study visit. Findings from the need assessment were shared with the Parliamentary Centre throughout the process of program design and helped to inform decisions regarding meeting arrangements and agenda-setting. The field coordinators of the UNDP and the Bangladesh Parliament also communicated with the Parliamentary Centre staff on a frequent basis to exchange views on various aspects of logistical arrangements based on the results of consultation with participants and lessons learned from the previous study visit to Canada. Furthermore, the agenda was openly shared and finalized with the delegates well in advance of the Study Visit, which prevented the cancellation of meetings during the Visit.

2. The success of the learning process would have not been possible without the commitment and support of the delegation themselves during the mission. The delegation participated actively in most meetings and interacted with Canadian speakers with important and thought-provoking questions and comments. The leader of the delegation and his assistant played a successful coordinating role in keeping the group together for most part of the programmed activities and communicating with the staff of the Parliamentary Centre on an ongoing basis in addressing the needs of the delegation.
3. It is noteworthy that the High Commission of Bangladesh to Canada offered generous in-kind assistance with this visit in terms of both programming and logistical arrangements. The Bangladesh High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr. Rafiq Ahmed Khan, and other diplomatic officials greeted the delegation in person upon their arrival and accompanied the delegation to various important meetings throughout their program in Ottawa. The High Commissioner provided the delegation with a briefing on the Canadian political system and relationships between Canada and Bangladesh, which set out a good context for the delegation to make better sense of information gained from other meetings during the visit. The High Commission also provided enormous help in terms of handling contingencies such as air ticket changes and personal transportation needs of the delegates.

Despite the overall success in delivering the program, there were occasions in the course of the program delivery where challenges arose due to lack of prior communications and coordination. The following are some areas of programming and logistics where improvement should be made in the future.

Lessons Learned in Programming

- Need to be flexible and adaptive to unanticipated contingencies in the course of program implementation. The program agenda had been confirmed with the delegation at the outset of this study visit but there were several occasions where the agenda changed due to unpredictable contingencies. One Canadian MP invited to meet with the delegation was not able to show up as scheduled. We did not receive warning from the MP's assistant until the last minute, but it

turned out that the MP was asked to deal with some emergency on behalf of the Minister he was assisting. A Canadian Senator also had to leave his meeting earlier because he was called to chair a committee meeting convened on an emergency basis. Understanding the fast changing schedule of politicians working in the minority parliament, the delegation exhibited great flexibility in reacting to the unrealized part of the program.

- Need for clarifications of the protocol for official recognition at the chamber of the House. The delegation requested that they be formally recognized by the Canadian Parliament during Question Period. Unfortunately, the Parliamentary Centre was unable to make arrangements to meet the request because the rules of the Canadian Parliament provide that only guests invited by the Speaker can be recognized at the Chamber. We hope that future delegations from Bangladesh Parliament could be alerted to this rule in advance.

Lessons Learned in Logistics

- Future delegations should be advised of the proper procedures to access utilities and services in case of personal emergencies while traveling. One delegate suffered from undesirable physical conditions for a number of times while on the mission and later requested medical treatment. However, the delegate had not been informed how to use his health coverage plan and instruction provided by UNDP was not clear enough for the Parliamentary Centre to make medical arrangements. It was fortunate that the physical condition of the delegate improved and the High Commission provided assurance of assistance on needed basis. We recommend that protective arrangements with respect to health coverage be clarified to the delegation prior to departure.

We appreciate having the opportunity to facilitate this mutually fulfilling initiative of exchanges between the Canadian and Bangladesh Parliaments. On the whole, we believe that the study visit offered a pleasant and productive learning opportunity for both the Bangladesh MPs and ourselves. We believe that the effective delivery of the program is by a large part attributable to the continuous support of UNDP throughout the process of preparing for and implementing the study visit. The Parliamentary Centre certainly looks forward to future opportunities to continue building upon the good start of our cooperation.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Participants in the Study Visit

Appendix B: Final Agenda of Realised Programmed Activities

Appendix A: List of Delegates for Study Visit to Ottawa, Canada

Members of the Parliament of Bangladesh October 17 – 21, 2005

Please find below the list of participants for the upcoming Study Visit to Canada:

1. **Hon. Mr. Al-Haj Syed Wahidul Alam**, Member of Parliament, Whip & Member of House Committee (**Head of the Delegation**)
2. **Hon. Mr. Mohammad Mizanur Rahman Minu**, Member of Parliament, Member of Privileges Committee & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs
3. **Hon. Mr. M. Faruk Khan**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Undertakings Committee & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Youth and Sports
4. **Hon. Mr. Moazzem Hossain Alal**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Accounts Committee, Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs
5. **Hon. Mr. Mohammad Moshir Rahman Ranga**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Accounts Committee & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance
6. **Hon. Mr. Sultan Mahmud Babu**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Accounts Committee & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Housing and Public Works
7. **Hon. Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmad**, Member of Parliament, Member of Library Committee & Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Youth and Sports
8. **Hon. Ms. Begum Sarwari Rahman**, Member of Parliament
9. **Hon. Ms. Begum Merina Rahman**, Member of Parliament
10. **Hon. Mr. Mohammad Abdul Gani**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Accounts Committee & Member of Estimates Committee
11. **Hon. Dr. Mohammad Rustum Ali Faraji**, Member of Parliament, Member of Public Undertakings Committee & Member of Estimates Committee
12. **Hon. Mr. Mohammad Mozammel Haque**, Member of Parliament & Member of Standing Committee on Social Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13. **Mr. Mohammad Shahabuddin**, Deputy Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat
14. **Mr. Mohammad Rejaul Karim**, Assistant Private Secretary to the Honourable Speaker
15. **Mr. Mohammad Nazrul Islam**, Senior Assistant Secretary to the Head of the Delegation

Appendix B: Program Agenda for the Study Visit to Ottawa

Members of Parliament from Bangladesh

October 17 – 21, 2005

Saturday October 15 Arrival

21:10 **Arrival at Ottawa International Airport – Flight AC 466**
Greeted by officials from the Bangladeshi High Commission in Ottawa and representatives from the Parliamentary Centre
Check-in at Aristocrat Suite Hotel

Sunday October 16

Free Time

Monday October 17

10:00 – 11:40 **Orientation Session at Parliamentary Centre & Overview of the Parliamentary System in Canada**

Purpose: Introduction to the Parliamentary Centre and overview of the Canadian Parliamentary System, including its legislative process, functions, procedures, organizational structure, history and trends

Speaker: Mrs. Amelita Armit – Director of Asia & Eastern European Programs, Parliamentary Centre

Location: Boardroom 806, Parliamentary Centre

12:00 – 13:30 **Welcome Lunch on Parliament Hill**

Location: Parliamentary Restaurant – Room 602, Centre Block

13:30 – 14:15 **Tour of Parliament**

Location: Parliament Hill – Centre Block

14:15 – 15:00 **Observe Question Period in the House of Commons**

Location: Parliament Hill – Centre Block

- 15:15 – 16:15 **Meeting with Member of the House of Commons**
- Purpose: Overview of the role and responsibilities of Canadian Members of the House of Commons and their experience and expertise in managing relationships with constituencies, media and staff
- Speaker: Mr. Deepak Obhrai, Member of the House of Commons (Calgary East) and Member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 172-E, Centre Block
- 19:00 **Welcome Dinner Hosted by the Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Mr. Rafiq Ahmed Khan**
- Location: Residence of the High Commissioner
105 Pond Street, Rockcliffe

Tuesday October 18

- 10:00 – 11:15 **Session on the Canadian Legislative Process**
- Purpose: Overview of the process by which laws are drafted, amended, adopted and reviewed, accompanied by a discussion on how the Standing Orders and parliamentary procedures guide this process.
- Speakers: Mr. Charles Robert, Principal Clerk, Procedure, Senate
Mr. Jean-François Lafleur, Procedural Clerk, Legislative Service, House of Commons
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 263 - S, Centre Block
- 11:15 – 11:30 Break
- 11:30 – 12:00 **Meeting with the Honourable Daniel Hays, Speaker of the Senate**
- Purpose: Courtesy Visit
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 274-F, Centre Block
- 12:00 – 13:30 Lunch

- 13:30 – 14:10 **Meeting with the Chair of a Senate Committee**
- Purpose: Overview of the structure of the Senate and the roles and responsibilities of Senators in Canada
- Speaker: Senator David P. Smith, Chair of the Committee on Rules, Procedures and Rights of Parliament
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 257, East Block
- 14:10 – 14:30 Break
- 14:30 – 15:15 **Meeting with the Library of Parliamentary Information and Research Service**
- Purpose: Presentation on the role of the Information and Research Service of the Library of Parliament in providing information, research and analysis services by assigning subject specialists to assist parliamentary committees as well as providing research services to individual parliamentarians
- Speaker: Mr. Hugh Finsten, Associate Parliamentary Librarian
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 257, East Block
- 15:15 – 15:30 Break
- 15:30 – 16:10 **Overview of Public Consultation in the Parliamentary Process**
- Purpose: Discussion of the role of parliamentary committees and parliamentarians in initiating citizen input into policy development and in undertaking legislative hearings in the committee process; overview of methods and mechanisms of citizen engagement employed by political parties.
- Speaker: Hon. Judi Longfield – Member of the House of Commons & Chair of the Subcommittee on Parliamentary Privilege of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs & Subcommittee on the Disclosure Statement under the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 257, East Block

Wednesday October 19

- 10:00 – 11:00 **Briefing with the Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Mr. Rafiq Ahmed Khan**
- Location: Bangladeshi High Commission in Ottawa - 275 Bank Street, Suite 302
- 11:30 – 12:00 **Meeting with the Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons**
- Purpose: Courtesy Visit
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 216-N, Centre Block
- 12:00 – 13:45 Lunch
- 13:45 – 14:45 **Meeting with an MP to review the Oversight/Scrutiny Functions of Parliamentary Committees (Cancelled)**
- 14:45 – 15:00 Break
- 15:00 – 16:30 **Meeting with the Chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee**
- Purpose: Overview of the work of the Public Accounts Committee as a case study to illustrate the oversight function of committees in inquiring, reviewing and making recommendations on matters assigned to the executive branch
- Speaker: Mr. John Williams, Member of the House of Commons & Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
Ms. Elizabeth Kingston, Clerk of the Public Accounts Committee
- Location: Parliament Hill – Room 307, West Block

Thursday October 20

- 10:00 – 11:00 **Session on the Oversight of Parliament in the Poverty Reduction Process**
- Purpose: Comparison of lessons learned and priority areas for the Canadian and Bangladesh Parliaments in strengthening

oversight on policy-based issues, with a specific reference to budget oversight of Parliament in the poverty reduction process

Speaker: Dr. Steven Langdon, Director of Africa Programs
Parliamentary Centre

Location: Parliament Hill - Room 625, Wellington Building

11:00 – 11:15 Break

11:15 – 12:30 **Session on the Work of Committees**

Purpose: Overview of committee procedures and the role and duties of committee staff in supporting parliamentarians in their committee work

Speakers: Ms Marie-Andrée Lajoie, Clerk Assistant,
Committees Directorate, House of Commons
Ms Heather Lank, Principal Clerk, Committees
Directorate, Senate

Location: Parliament Hill - Room 625, Wellington Building

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:00 **Session on Training Programs for New Members of Parliament**

Purpose: Description of the various orientation programs and training resources for new Members of Parliament in Canada

Speakers: Ms Janice Hilchie, Principal Clerk, Information
Management, House of Commons

Location: Room 1200, La Promenade, 151 Sparks St.

15:00 – 15:15 Break

15:15 – 17:15 **Guided Tour of the City of Ottawa**

Friday October 21

10:00 Pick up of 2 delegates at Aristocrat Hotel and transfer to Ottawa for departure

10:00 – 11:00 **Meeting with a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Province on Community Development Initiatives**

Purpose: Overview of the roles and responsibilities of Members of Provincial Legislative Assemblies, with a specific focus on community development initiatives undertaken within constituencies

Speaker: Mr. Norman Sterling, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Lanark-Carleton)

Location: Boardroom 806, Parliamentary Centre

11:00 – 11:15 Break

11:15 – 12:00 **Debriefing Session with the Parliamentary Centre**

Location: Boardroom 806, Parliamentary Centre

14:00 Pick up of 1 delegate at Aristocrat Hotel and transfer to Ottawa airport for departure

15:00 Pick up of 5 delegates at Aristocrat Hotel and transfer to Ottawa airport for departure

18:00 Pick up of 6 delegates at Aristocrat Hotel and transfer to Ottawa airport for departure

One delegate to stay in Ottawa until November 6