

Commonwealth Youth Parliament

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November 6-10, 2016
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Opening of the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament

Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Good morning, everyone. My name is Kate Ryan-Lloyd. I am the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. It's a great honour for me to be a part of the opening of the Eighth Commonwealth Youth Parliament this morning.

To begin, we would like to note that we are gathered today on the traditional lands of the Lekwungen people, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations. We begin, as we always do, with an acknowledgement of our respect for their traditions, cultures and wisdom.

We open this morning's proceedings with a warm British Columbia welcome to all of you, our youth delegates, and also to many distinguished guests who are attending the program with us this week and assisting with its proceedings.

In particular, on behalf of the British Columbia branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am honoured to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Akbar Khan, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. In addition, from the British Virgin Islands, we're honoured to have with us the Hon. Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe, the Speaker, and Phyllis Evans, the Clerk, of the British Virgin Islands House of Assembly.

We have the assistance of elected members from across the Commonwealth who have agreed to spend time with us all this week and serve as mentors to the CYP, from various parliamentary institutions. We have, from the Parliament of Sri Lanka, the Hon. Chathura Sandeepa Senaratne; from New South Wales, Australia, Mr. Adam Marshall; from the Scottish Parliament, Ms. Kate Forbes; from Alberta, our neighbour here in western Canada, we're pleased to have joining us Ms. Jessica Littlewood, MLA; two British Columbia MLAs, as well, from British Columbia, Canada — Spencer Chandra Herbert and Ms. Jodie Wickens on this side of the House. I think you might be in your own, seat, Jodie, if I'm not mistaken. That's very helpful.

Also assisting with our conference team this week are a group of dedicated parliamentary staff, including Ms. Allison Lloyd, who is the Clerk of Committees from the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Allison's over here. And from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, a dedicated team of officials who have assisted us in co-hosting and with all the preparations to date. They include Ms. Meenakshi Dhar, Ms. Lucy Pickles, Ms. Arlene Busette, Ms. Sahar Eljack and Ms. Shehana Udat. I would like to thank each of them for their contributions and help over a period of many weeks.

As I said, it is a great honour for the British Columbia branch to host this conference on behalf of the Canadian region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We have been eagerly awaiting this opportunity for over a year. When it was last hosted, in Darwin, in the Northern Territory, in Australia, it was a remarkable success. We hope



that you will find your experience here, also, to be a memorable and engaging one for you.

To open the proceedings, I will, in a moment, call upon an elder of our community, Mary Anne Thomas of the Esquimalt Nation, to offer a special blessing.

But first, I just wanted to mention that we had the honour and privilege of having Ms. Thomas present with us here at the Legislature, along with many distinguished First Nations chiefs, only a few months ago. We were gathered in this chamber to be part of a special ceremony presenting the Talking Stick, which is currently positioned just on the side of the Speaker's chair, to the Legislative Assembly. As you may know, talking sticks are important symbols that are used to indicate the right of a person to speak and to be heard and listened to.

As Ms. Thomas said on that occasion, the Talking Stick is about dialogue, relationships, respect, working together and being patient with one another. So we have an opportunity to have the Talking Stick today and throughout the week to be the symbol of your parliamentary proceedings, indicating that these, too, will be undertaken in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding, as embodied by this Talking Stick.

With that, I would now like to invite Ms. Thomas to join me at the front to offer a special blessing to our proceedings. I'd ask you all to please rise.

Elder Mary Anne Thomas: Good morning, everyone. [SENĆOŦEN was spoken.] My borrowed name is Mary Anne Thomas from Esquimalt Nation. Today I'm very honoured to be with you all, welcoming you all to Esquimalt and Songhees territory.

To share this prayer, because everything that comes out of our mouth is sharp, is healing. I'll be praying to the [SENĆOŦEN was spoken] — to the higher power — and to my mother and my father. With the legacy that she left and he left with me, I put that shoe on and I do the best I can. All the love and respect — that's all I'm going to put out. I can't look at anybody and judge anybody, because I need to look in the mirror. What do I need to do in my yard? Fix things in my own yard.

Today, I'm honoured to be with the Talking Stick that comes with this [SENĆOŦEN was spoken], this beautiful home. Everything that we're going to talk, everything that we're going to say, is from the heart, and it's the truth, because there's no time for lies and judgment, no time for excuses.

This morning, I just really want to pray. I'll share more with you after I open up with a prayer.

[SENĆOŦEN was spoken.]

Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord. Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord to love one another, to love one another.

Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord. Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord to help one another, to help one another.

Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord. Brothers and sisters, I've got a message from the Lord to forgive one another, to forgive one another.

[SENĆOŦEN was sung.]

[SENĆOŦEN was spoken.] All my relations, *hychka*.

You can all be seated.

I want to share with each and every one of you. I'm so honoured today to be asked to come and share a prayer with you.

When you're working out in the field... I'd really like to share about Linda Reid and the way we work together. We respect each other, the way they come to our place and ask if I could come and do a prayer.

Anything you do, go and approach the people that you want to talk to, so nothing gets out of hand, like things don't go right. With the work that you do, go and respect that person and go and visit and see them.

You and I — we're all beautiful flowers. We're all beautiful *spaken*. That's "flowers" in our language. All the things that we nourish and feed each other, we're taking all the good. That's the strength, you know. We're not going to be looking at each other, backstabbing each other. We're loving and honouring — really grateful that we're meeting each other, from the furthest to the nearest.

You and I have our spirit here. Life's too short sometimes. I do everything that I can in my life to do everything right. Everything that's going to come out of my mouth is respect, love, patience. Yes, I have people that backstab. I look at them, and I pray for them. I'm not going to get mad and go to their level and say things. From your heart, this is the one that's alive. This is the one that's going to leave us when our body goes cold and we go home.

I really wanted to share that what we put out is what we're going to get back. I always tell my children: "Even if you don't know anybody, you nod your head, and you say hello and tell them who you are. Even if they don't answer, you did your part. Give them a smile. Respect them."

Even your worst enemy — we say hello and pray for them. Then when we go to bed, we're going to be able to have a good sleep, because we didn't judge and say things that weren't nice. When we do that, and then when we're asleep, we toss and turn. Everything that we did, when we go to bed, is at the foot of our bed. So everything that we do is all respect and love.

I'm really honoured to meet each and every one of you. You guys are all so special. Nobody's higher than anybody. It's the commandments in our life that we don't just pray at church. We pray to the trees. We pray to the water. We pray for the air. All those are living.

I'm going to share something with you. There was a nephew that was saying to me: "Mary Anne, if I go and ask somebody to help me, they'll put me in a crazy house, and I know I'm not crazy." He says: "I was having a bad time. I was going to give up my life." He says: "You know, this man came out of a tree and followed." He said: "Pick up your head. You have a gift. You can carve. You've got all these blessings. Take care of it. Grab hold of it. Don't put your head down to shorten your life. It's the Creator that's the one that going to take your life, not you setting it up."

He turned around, and he kept walking. He says: "No, I need to go and ask him his name." So he ran to followed him. He saw him open this tree. He opened the door, and he went down. And he asked him: "I need to ask you. What is your name?"

He said: "You know, you're not supposed to follow me." So he walked with him quite a ways, and he said: "You know, I was told to come and tell you to hold your head up high. I gave you a gift. Keep it alive. Other peoples' words don't make it so, don't bring you down. You just thank them for the words, and you keep on going. You have a gift: to carve the totem poles, the Talking Stick." So the fellow walked back, and he kept on walking. He says: "You know, I don't understand." He turned around. He tried to go to that same tree to try and open the door, and that door wasn't there.

I just really wanted to share something very valuable. It's in everybody's life. We have our language. We have our names to tell us where we're from. We have our big hearts to open up to each other, to be a gift to each other. Sometimes we're looking for something, and it's right under our nose. We have each other. That's where we're going to get the answer.

I wish you all well in your lives, and I'm really honoured to have this short time to share something with you.

All my relations, *hychka*. Thank you.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Thank you very much, Mary Anne, for your words and for your presence with us this morning. We're very appreciative.

Next I am honoured to introduce and welcome to our proceedings the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr. Akbar Khan. Prior to taking up his post as Secretary-General in January 2015, Mr. Khan had dedicated his career to the practice of law, with notable experience in international law.

His passion for democracy and the rule of law has resulted in many professional achievements. Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Khan has also served as a member of the prestigious World Economic Forum global council on the rule of law.

On behalf of the Eighth Commonwealth Youth Parliament, I would like to extend gratitude to Mr. Khan for his support of this event and his presence here today and invite him to make some opening remarks.

Mr. Akbar Khan (Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association): Thank you, and a very good morning. I will start by thanking very much Elder Mary Anne Thomas for a very inspiring start to our Commonwealth Youth Parliament. The principles which she has talked about — respect for human beings and equality — are central to who we are in the Commonwealth family. It is fitting for her to talk about those principles here in a place known as parliament, which represents all peoples.

In our Commonwealth, all of us are equal, whether we are the poorest, the richest, the strongest or the weakest. Across all of our races of our nine regions are two billion people. What is central that holds us together as a golden thread in the Commonwealth is our respect for human dignity.

So thank you very much, Elder Thomas, for telling us and reminding us that we may sit here as Youth Parliamentarians, and we may sit here with many achievements and accomplishments, but in fact, each and every one of us must respect each other as human beings. That is fundamentally why we are here in this place as a community of human beings who respect ourselves and respect each other. Together we try to improve the world that we know as the Commonwealth.

Against that background, I'd like to start my opening remarks. I thank, very much, the Deputy Clerk for introducing me.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the Hon. Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly — Speaker Reid.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize the Hon. Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe, the Speaker of the British Virgin Islands Legislature, who has kindly offered to host the Ninth Commonwealth Youth Parliament. We look forward to her presence here to

support the current hosts and also to take forward the banner of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament to the Caribbean next year.

Also, I take this opportunity to recognize the members of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly and members from other Commonwealth parliaments, who have stepped up and given freely of their time to be mentors for all of us here this week, to give you an opportunity to see what it is to be a parliamentarian from their perspectives.

Finally, I'd also like to take this opportunity — and certainly not least — to recognize Mr. Craig James, who is the Clerk, and Ms. Ryan-Lloyd, who is the Deputy Clerk of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, who have worked tirelessly with Speaker Reid in order to put together for you an absolutely tremendous program for this week. Also, I take this opportunity to welcome Mrs. Phyllis Evans, Clerk of the British Virgin Islands Legislative Assembly.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to welcome our Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarians. A very good morning to everybody, and welcome to the opening of the Eighth Commonwealth Youth Parliament. It is a great privilege and pleasure to join you here in Victoria, British Columbia.

I want to congratulate all of our approximately, I believe, 60 Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarians who have made it here to Victoria. I know that many of you have travelled very far to be here, and I'm sure you will have an extremely exciting and rewarding week ahead of you.

As the Secretary-General of the CPA, now an association in its 105th year of promoting democracy across the Commonwealth, we represent the parliamentary arm of the Commonwealth. I'm absolutely delighted to see such enthusiasm across our young people to participate in one of our key platforms that supports engagement with young people.

Together with our Commonwealth Youth Parliament, we have this year also unveiled and started to deliver a new strand of work known as the CPA roadshows. They have started across the Commonwealth, and we have spoken to in excess of 7,000 young people from the age of eight upwards to 18, to encourage young people in schools and colleges to engage with their local parliamentarians in order to talk about the Commonwealth and the importance of democracy.

In my view, it isn't about engaging young people at the time of election. Young people are increasingly suspicious of parliamentarians who engage them at the time of election. What we are hoping to do is to build a community of young people who are going to take forward the ideals of democracy for all of us in society, not just to be engaged at the time of elections.

Having gone across the Commonwealth in the last ten months of my tenure, I've spoken to in excess of 7,000 young people. Why do we do this work? Why are we starting at the age of eight upwards to 18? We do this because democracy, in my view, demands active and involved citizens of all ages, and all ages need to take action to make our societies a better place.

My takeaway from speaking to Commonwealth youth across various ages in the Commonwealth is that, far from being disinterested and disengaged in matters of politics as they're often portrayed in the media and elsewhere, our young people in the Commonwealth are increasingly active on political issues relevant to their lives. Your presence here is clear evidence of this.

What does that actually mean to us in the Commonwealth? What it means to me, as Commonwealth Secretary-General for the Parliamentary Association, is that it speaks to the need for parliamentarians and parliaments to depart from a status quo approach to doing politics.

It speaks to the need for us all collectively who care about democracy to work harder to capture the energy, imagination and views of our young people on political issues that are important to them today and tomorrow, and to challenge and to channel young people to engage in the political processes of parliamentary democracy.

But it's very important that we do this together. Young people need to hear from politicians that they, too, share the interests and concerns about key issues — for example, issues around employment, one of the matters which you will look at in the course of coming days. Issues around climate change, equality, education and affordable housing are some of the issues that affect young people today and future generations. Politicians need to engage on these issues to demonstrate that they're not simply concerned about party politics, that they're not simply concerned about their careers, that they are absolutely concerned about the next generation and the future of stable and prosperous societies, which democracy supports.

Likewise, with about 60 percent of the Commonwealth's population of two billion currently under the age of 30, parliaments, as an institution, also need to adapt and to become more accessible and transparent to all citizens in society, including actively reaching out and engaging young people in society through the greater use of digital technology, and to be more innovative and creative in the way in which they communicate their messages.

I'm delighted to say that an excellent example of one of our Commonwealth legislatures doing precisely this is here in British Columbia, where the Legislative Assembly has developed a number of programs and is taking great strides in its parliamentary outreach program. As examples of the initiatives of those programs which have gone forward, the Legislative Assembly financially supports legislative interns, enabling graduate students an opportunity to immerse themselves here in the Legislature in politics and parliamentary life for six months; the opportunity to sponsor local Youth Parliaments and the Universities Model Parliament; and, also, Speaker Reid hosting a women in parliament conference. All of these initiatives are absolutely vital to bolster and promote the ideas of parliamentary democracy for future generations. Certainly, the need to engage young people is an urgent and pressing one.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, therefore, designed this Commonwealth youth program in order to demonstrate to young people who are aspiring to be parliamentarians, but also to be better-informed citizens, the principles of parliamentary democracy through their active participation in parliamentary life — taking part in the making of legislation, debating matters of national and international importance, holding your government to account through the use of committees and enforcing good behaviour through codes of conduct, practice and other tools.

A unique feature of our Commonwealth Youth Parliament at the international level is the inclusion of young Members of Parliament who act as mentors. I encourage all of you to seek out your mentors, both in the caucuses and in the debates, and to seek advice and guidance. They are not here to debate for you. This is about your opportunity to learn by doing and not to rely on your mentors to do the work for you but to use them and to seek their guidance and advice on how to hone your skills as young parliamentarians.

This week's program offers you a great opportunity, at firsthand, to be involved in one of the key public institutions of accountability that underpins our parliamentary democracy in the Commonwealth. To quote Speaker Reid: "Accountability is the hallmark of parliamentary democracy. In any free and democratic society, citizens must have the ability to hold their government to account."

At the end of this program, what do we want to see from you? Working together and collectively, we hope that a number of objectives will be achieved, one of which is an opportunity to use this platform of the Youth Parliament to hear from you, as Youth Parliamentarians, about your views on key issues which we as a CPA but also as parliamentarians and parliamentary staff can take forward to engage better with young people across the Commonwealth.

We also, through the process of learning-by-doing this week, hope that your roles already as leaders of today will be strengthened and, returning to your own societies, will help you to influence and engage policy- and decision-makers to strengthen democracy in your areas of interest and in your societies. This is very much about a youth-led initiative where we anticipate that you will return to your societies and take forward, amplify and multiply what you have learned here in order to strengthen your own societies and democracy.

We also hope that you will be better prepared if you aspire to be a young parliamentarian. Certainly, with young people under the age of 30 making up less than 2 percent of the world's MPs, this is a very important agenda for all of us who genuinely believe in inclusion and diversity in our places of parliament.

Finally, my sincere hope, above all, is that this experience's collegiality, which is very much the lifeblood of the Commonwealth family, will endure beyond these doors, that when you return home, you will continue to stay within our Commonwealth network, and that you will continue to speak to your colleagues, who, hopefully, you will form lifelong relationships with across this week.

In closing, I, therefore, wish to thank you all again for participating. This is about you. This is your Youth Parliament program. So please do engage fully, take from it what you wish and use your mentors and those around you to the best opportunity to you.

I wish to thank the Hon. Speaker, again, from this branch, who stepped up to host the 8th Youth Parliament, and, also, the Clerk and their staff for a very exciting program that's been put together for you this week. And thank you for your participation. Without you and without our branches, this program would not be possible. Thank you very much indeed.

Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Thank you very much, Mr. Khan, for those opening words for us.

Our program will continue now with our Speaker, the Hon. Linda Reid. Since Madame Speaker's election as Speaker in the year 2013, the Speaker has applied her passion for community, for parliament and for public service to her role.

Madame Speaker has been elected six times here in British Columbia for the constituency of Richmond East. She was first elected in 1991, so she is, in fact, British Columbia's longest-serving member. She is also our fourth female Speaker.

Madame Speaker is an experienced and passionate parliamentarian, having first been active herself in Youth Parliament. She continues her involvement with youth today, serving as a supporter of Youth Parliaments, a mentor to young people and, also, as a role

model and advocate for woman parliamentarians in her role as chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians association here in the Canadian region.

In parliament, she has also served in a variety of roles, so she knows them each well — in opposition and government, in cabinet, as Deputy Speaker and then, of course, as our Speaker since the year 2013.

It is my pleasure to invite her to address you now.

Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia): Mr. Khan, thank you for those lovely remarks. Let me say, I was first a parliamentarian as a Youth Parliamentarian 40 years ago. When I look out at you folks today, commit to me that one of you, many of you, all of you, will seek public office, will work in the process, will indeed continue to build government, no matter the country from whence you come, because you are the stabilizing influence. There's no question in my mind that all of you are.

The words of Mary Anne Thomas this morning — I adore Mary Anne Thomas — and the notion that we share this land speaks to me. The notion that we can do so with huge regard and huge respect. Parliaments across the land — all of them — have, as their basis, a regard for their citizenry. How we engage, how we involve ourselves in civilian life, in parliamentary life, in business life — all of those things, for me, have to have the benchmark of civility, have to have the benchmark of regard and respect.

I'm so delighted that Speaker Scatliffe is with us. I first met her in a meeting of the Atlantic region more than a year ago now. The notion that you can make those connections and continue to build on them over time speaks to me.

I'm delighted, again, that we're on the territory of the Lekwungen people and delighted that we continue to have discussion that matters.

Those of you who have chosen to mentor, from Scotland and beyond — thank you, Kate — the notion that you give your time. You are the sustainability project for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and for parliaments across the land. There's no question in my mind.

All of you will have come from a particular vantage point. Enjoy that. Emblazon that on others. Have folks understand your points of view. It will only ever be communication that holds us together. If we have to resort to other means, we will lose.

How we communicate ideas, whether or not we believe they're valuable enough to be heard from your colleagues, is hugely important. The role of the Speakers in your parliament is to guarantee that everyone's voice is to be heard. You may not agree — absolutely, this is the place to disagree — but we want a resolution to be solved with words.

These places are normally filled with people similar to today — people of great passion. Their ideas speak to them. Things they believe in matter to them deeply. Advocate for them, express them, convey information. See if you can get others to adopt your points of view — hugely important if we are to continue to build a vibrant society.

It's a vital challenge; there's no question. But all of you have the makings of glorious parliamentarians. There's no doubt in my mind.

We have a Speaker in the Schools program. Nothing warms my heart more or gives me greater joy than to see 10-year-olds, grade 5 students in our province — dressed up in robes — engaging as Speakers, as Clerks. They often don't want to be the Speaker because they want to have the ability to make an impassioned speech about something,

and they're like: "You don't ever get to speak about anything." Sometimes that's true, so I'm delighted to be with you today.

We have a partnership with the Royal Museum on governance and beyond. How, indeed, can we take the lessons learned in parliaments and have them come to play not just in classrooms but in universities and colleges and workplaces? So much of what we value, so much of the character of the Commonwealth — regard and integrity and respect — has to suffuse the workplaces we're in as well.

The pin you have today, the replica of our Talking Stick, absolutely speaks to me. Any time we can foster mutual regard, mutual understanding, we absolutely need to do that. A gift from the Songhees First Nation to the Lieutenant-Governor, it was during a special blessing of the renaming of the Salish Sea that the former Lieutenant-Governor of our province, the Hon. Steven Point, presented it to the current Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. Judith Guichon. She, in turn, presented it to me for the duration of this parliament.

When I rise into the Speaker's chair when our House is in session and see it just to my right, it absolutely speaks to me. It is about reconciliation. It is about what we do tomorrow, and it is about all of us, I think, having an understanding of how we measure success.

You will, hopefully, have a measure of success from your time with us this week. But when you return to your homes, when you enter into meetings, when you enter into debates and engagements, how is it you're going to measure success? Know that going in, because the product will be of much greater durability if that is understood on the way in.

I cannot overspeak the necessity for symbols in our lives. I think they carry with them huge tradition and, frankly, huge imagination and a huge ability to take forward. Our former Lieutenant-Governor I mentioned, Steven Point — this is a quote of his: "A nation is an accumulation of its beliefs and values. And sometimes the only way we find to discuss these matters is through wordless symbols." It warms my heart, that quote.

I'd like to add that this past February, the Legislative Assembly welcomed their first First Nations woman as a member, with a special ceremony of First Nations leaders and cultural representatives.

This Youth Parliament is another way for us to welcome and encourage young people of all genders, origins and orientations to contribute to making our countries better places.

As a parent, I am proud that my children and the children of our province and our Commonwealth have opportunities to connect to the political process. I am confident that the youth of today will become the great leaders of our countries tomorrow.

We will need your energy. We will need your creativity, your imagination, your vision. We will need your gifts and your talents in meeting the many challenges facing our countries and our world.

My sincere hope is that this Youth Parliament will be a positive step in you becoming part of making the political process — in representing the hopes and dreams of all of our citizens — a much more durable process.

Thank you, and good wishes for your time with us. I'm so very glad you've come. Enjoy.

Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Thank you very much, Madame Speaker.

Next I would like to introduce our Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Craig James. Craig has worked in parliamentary institutions since 1978, when he first started

with the Saskatchewan Legislature. He then came to British Columbia in 1987 to serve as our first Clerk of Committees. Following 14 years of dedicated parliamentary service, Mr. James was appointed acting Chief Electoral Officer for British Columbia during a period of many innovative initiatives.

Mr. James was appointed the 12th Clerk of the B.C. House in the year 2012. He is an active member of the Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada and is a recognized expert in the field of parliamentary accountability and post-expenditure scrutiny by parliaments.

Craig, thank you for being with us today.

Craig James (Clerk, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia): Thank you very much, Kate.

It is a distinct pleasure to be here this morning. We're so delighted that all of you can join us for this week in Victoria, British Columbia. For those of you who are not familiar with rain and cloud and cold, this is as bad as it gets in Victoria. We hope, too, that you're able to see a little bit of Victoria while you're here.

It's my pleasure to join Madame Speaker Reid in welcoming you to this august place for this week and, also, to recognize the Secretary-General who's with us, as well, and some of my very, very good friends, who go back a long way, from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: Lucy, Meenakshi and Arlene, over in the corner there. We've known each other for quite some time.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association does great work. If anything can come out of this seminar/parliament/tutorial over the course of this week, it's that we really hope you go back to your countries and beat the bushes for those that want to be engaged in parliamentary life.

We have a legislative intern program that was referred to earlier. It's a program that is excellent. We track the progress of the legislative interns over the years. You will be surprised at the number of legislative interns from this place that end up back here or that end up in another parliament or that end up at the federal parliament in Ottawa.

It would be interesting to know where those delegates from the First Commonwealth Youth Parliament are now — whether they are working, going to school, are in the private sector or government or, indeed, in parliament, perhaps not as parliamentarians but perhaps in the Clerk's office or the Sergeant's office or other areas of parliamentary life itself.

I'd also like to recognize the Hon. Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe and Phyllis Evans. I'm going to single them out, because I'm very grateful for your ability to facilitate Speaker Reid's participation in the CPA Caribbean regional conference a couple of summers ago. We were just absolutely delighted that you were able to do that for us. I know that Speaker Reid had a fabulous time and was talking about it constantly for the better part of a year.

With that, I know that over the course of this week, Susan, over in the corner there, and Kate will be at the Table. To the extent that I'm able to, I will be here too and, hopefully, in some of your caucus meetings in other areas. If you don't see me, it's not because I have no interest. It's because there are a lot of other things going on this week that require my attention as well.

In any event, my office is room 221, which is just down the hallway here. If any of you at any time just want to drop in and talk about your week here or life at the Table or life in parliament, I would be more than happy to do so. I know Kate would enjoy that,

and I know that Susan would enjoy that — and of course, Speaker Reid, as well, and anybody else that you can nab too.

In the back corner over there is our Sergeant-at-Arms, Gary Lenz, who has responsibilities for facilities — in other words, maintaining the place, looking after the grounds and the buildings that are on the parliamentary precinct. And he has serious duties about security, so please wear your name tags at all times. If you happen to leave the building, you may find it difficult to get back in. That would be of great value to Gary's team of security experts who roam the place.

I know we've got a few minutes before the end of this exercise, but when I speak to people, I always like to know what they're thinking. So if there are any questions that you have right now, I'd be more than happy to entertain them. If not, we might end up having an early coffee break.

I know that there's a wide divergence of delegates to this Youth Parliament this week, from countries as far away as Falkland Islands, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Australia and, of course, throughout Canada. Again, we're very delighted that you're here. We want to make this week a special week for you.

I'm very grateful, too, to our two members who have taken time out of their busy schedules to be here and to help you with your deliberations.

One thing to remember about parliament is that it is a microcosm of society. Perhaps that's what we're seeing here today. Every legislature and every parliament is really a microcosm of the society in which it is held. You get people who run for elected office who come from a wide range of different backgrounds and educational levels. It's a thrilling thing to see, especially in this place, as a parliament unfolds.

Just so you know, back in 1965, which is a long, long time ago, I was in what was then called the Older Boys Parliament in Saskatchewan, two provinces over. It has since, of course, become known as the Youth Parliament. I moved the first motion, which was defeated, enabling young women to participate in the Older Boys Parliament at the time. Two years later this seemed to get some traction, and across the country it became known as the Youth Parliament.

Sitting in the House, as you are now, I never thought, never dreamt in a million years that I would end up working in parliament. So I, perhaps, might become known as the accidental Clerk. It is a job and a position that I really enjoy, and I commend a life in parliament to all of you when you return.

Thank you very much for being here. I look forward to meeting with you throughout the week and talking with you about all aspects of this place and the roles that you see yourselves performing.

Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Thank you very much, Craig.

In order to close this morning's proceedings, I'm now pleased to introduce a remarkable young woman who will help us to do just that — Ms. Zoé Duhaime. Zoé is actually one of the CYP delegates this week, but she also has worked extensively in mediums of both written poetry and spoken word. She has competed in a number of slam poetry competitions and is currently working on her first book of poetry and illustrations while she attends the University of Victoria.

Zoé also recently performed here at the Legislature during the opening of a special exhibit, which is one floor down, celebrating 100 Years of Women and the Vote. I invite

all of you to explore that exhibit when time permits. An excerpt of her work is featured on the wall just above the photographs there.

Please help me welcome Ms. Duhaime, one of our CYP delegates, as she presents one of her works for us.

Zoé Duhaime: Hi. I've got a poem for you. It has been 100 years in B.C. since some women have had the vote, so I'm going to hand you a poem about that. It's called *100 Candle Bonfire*.

We set the table ourselves.
Let the dough rise for 99 years for good measure.
We polished the silverware ourselves,
argued with the men until it tarnished,
polished it again,
picked our teeth in the reflection of a butter knife.
We strung up the ribbons ourselves.
We raised the chickens,
aged the wine,
grew the lettuce until it was a forest.
There is a whole country to feed with this party,
and we are always trying to get better.
Self-work is best done after a good meal and company.
You are cordially invited to celebrate women with the vote.
Happy anniversary.
It's been 100 years since some women have had the vote.
There are so many candles that this cake looks like a bonfire,
and women have always known how to dance around a good flame,
a good hearth.
The vote hasn't solved all,
but it's a measure of worth.
It's a voice. It's a light.
It's the breathing embers of the feminist fight
that whimpers: "I will burn whenever you need me to."
And it will.
In a dish in the centre of the table,
5,000 kilometres long,
a dish of embers breathing deeply to birthday songs.
Happy 71st anniversary
since the Second World War re-enfranchised indigenous, Japanese veterans and votes.
Happy 68th anniversary
since the Hutterite and Mennonite vote.
Happy 67th anniversary
since the Chinese and Indian vote.
Happy 64th anniversary
since the Doukhobor.
Thirty-one years since you haven't had to be a British subject.
Twenty-eight years since you can vote on probation or parole.
Twelve years since you can vote in prison.
You might not know this,
but many of the women who fought for your right to vote were arrested for it.
You might not know this,
but the table that is now set with cake has once been the back of others.
So we eat mindfully,
and we celebrate forwards.
When you come to the table that we have set ourselves,
to eat at the dinner that we have raised ourselves,
to sing to the cake that we have baked ourselves,

blazing high like a parade,
you are invited to say the prayer.
What a feast and what a pause,
to have come so far and rest before we always go on.

Thank you very much.

Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): Thank you so much, Zoé, for those powerful words and for helping us conclude our opening ceremony.

With that, I will declare the Eighth Commonwealth Youth Parliament to be officially open.