GOODWILL MESSAGE FROM

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Chairperson of the CPA Canadian Region

Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, MLA, Speaker, Alberta Legislative Assembly and Conference Host

Members of the CPA Executive Committee

Honourable Speakers and Presiding Officers

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to express my profound regret for not being able to join you this year for this important conference of the CPA Canadian Region. This is due to other commitments made earlier in the year and the much-needed preparations for the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in South Africa this August and September.

May I at this point pause to express, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the entire Association and on my own behalf, profound sadness at the loss of life and property resulting from the crude oil explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. My thoughts and prayers are with you all at this time, particularly the people of Quebec.

I wish to convey to you greetings and best wishes for the conference from the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Rt Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP, United Kingdom, other Officers of the Association, and Members of the Executive Committee.

I am glad to note that this conference is being held at a time when the Commonwealth has adopted a Charter of the Commonwealth. Her Majesty, The Queen, signed it on Commonwealth Day this year. The signing of the Charter of the Commonwealth is the culmination of the review process carried out by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), to assess the relevance of the Commonwealth, whose report was received by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their conference in Perth, Australia, in November 2011.

The Charter of the Commonwealth has, among other things, emphasized the principles of democracy; human rights; international peace and security; tolerance, respect and understanding; freedom of expression; rule of law; sustainable development; and access to health, education, food shelter and old age services.

It is my conviction that, apart from democracy, human rights and sustainable development, the Commonwealth family will require higher levels of tolerance, respect and understanding. This is because the increasing global interdependence and the maturing of young democracies have multiplied the manner in which individuals and groups meet and exchange views.
I am glad that at the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, delegates will have an opportunity to assess the medium and long-term effects of the Charter of the Commonwealth in light of the development challenges affecting the member countries.

I believe that your regional conference in Canada will serve as one of the sources of the wider discussion, and subsequent deliberations, on the theme “Effective Solutions to Commonwealth Developmental Challenges”.

I also believe that issues of land and agriculture, informal economies and entrepreneurship, the future of the Millenium Development Goals and governance, will attract active participation and exchange from among delegates at regional and international levels. Canadian delegates to the annual conference may wish to contribute to the debate on ‘The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Transfer of Agricultural Technology and Research’, judging from the recurring global food and water scarcity caused by climate change.

At the same time, the Commonwealth and other communities in the world are still highly and equally concerned with issues of terrorism, human trafficking and the ill-treatment of women and other political minorities.

Distinguished delegates, I also wish to draw your attention to the annual Youth Parliament, as was decided by the Executive Committee in 2011. Largely following the alphabetical order of our regions, the first was held in London, United Kingdom, last year but the second will be held in Andhra Pradesh, India, with Africa having requested for more time to solicit for a host branch for the event. We have now been informed that the third such Youth Parliament next year will be held in North West Province, South Africa.

It is therefore useful for me to kindly request all branches in Canada to closely attend to the invitation circulars we send out for the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, particularly with reference to a letter I recently received from Brendon Bedford, a young man from Kitchener, Ontario, who attended the Youth Parliament last year, who claims that, and I partly quote:

“Therefore, I would ask you Dr Shija, to impress upon the Canadian CPA branches the benefits of this program to Canadian youth and the importance of sending representatives to this gathering. If we wish to continue to grow and develop the Commonwealth, we must have each member state well represented and familiar with the work of the Commonwealth as a whole.” Mr Bedford attended the CYP 2012 in London.

Lastly, Chairperson, I wish to congratulate the CPA Alberta Branch for accepting to host the 51st CPA Canadian Conference, as previously done by other branches. The concept of ‘hosting’ is a very strong tool in the Commonwealth Parliamentary family. It is through the availability of conference hosts that the Association is able to run its activities effectively and with the desired sparkle of social and cultural exchange and networking between members and staff.
I wish to inform distinguished delegates that while our annual parliamentary conference this year is securely planned to be hosted by South Africa, and Cameroon next year, there are still no indicative hosts for the event in 2015 and beyond. Offers are therefore invited.

Hon. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,
I wish you all great success in your conference deliberations and look forward to meeting you in Johannesburg, South Africa, later this year.
I thank you all for your kind attention.