

A Review of McGill University's
Professional Development
Programs for Parliaments
(2012-2021)



Meenakshi Dhar (March 2021)



School of Continuing Studies | École
d'éducation permanente



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Introduction

The first class in McGill University's Professional Development Program in Parliamentary Management was held in 2012, when more than two dozen parliamentary staff from around the world attended a one-week intensive session at McGill University and subsequently enrolled in a series of online courses, each moderated by an international expert. The Program, designed in consultation with parliaments across the Commonwealth, la Francophonie and beyond, aimed to complement the courses offered by other organizations and, in particular, to focus on combining theory with practical applications, offering 'higher level' courses than offered elsewhere, and on translating 'good international practice' to the 'best fit' for individual parliaments. Over the past 10 years, more than 250 parliamentary staff, government officials, trainers from various parliamentary training organizations and others have participated in the program.

In 2017, a sister Professional Development Program for newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) from small states was developed, for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It followed a similar approach to the Management Program, combining a one-week residency in Montreal with a number of complementary online courses. From 2017 through 2021, 58 MPs have completed the program.

As we celebrate McGill University's 10 years of offering professional development programs to both MPs and staff, we thought it would be appropriate to reflect on our achievements and to consider how we might better serve parliaments in the years ahead. We decided to reach out to the more than 300 past participants, and ask them questions such as:

- "What is/are the principal benefit(s) you obtained from participating in the Program?"
- "How could we make the program even more relevant to future participants?" and
- "How could McGill University and its partners assist your parliament in the future?"

We quickly realized that many of our participants, particularly those from the early years, had changed their email addresses or were otherwise unreachable. In the event, we emailed a questionnaire to 218 former participants. The response was encouraging – 100 responded, providing us with a wealth of feedback on the Programs.

Meenakshi Dhar, former Director of Programs at CPA, tabulated and analyzed the results for us.

This report highlights her findings. Additional information on our Programs can be found at

<https://www.mcgill.ca/scs-parliament>

We would like to thank all of the respondents to questionnaire.

Rick Stapenhurst

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Question 1:

What is your position/job title?

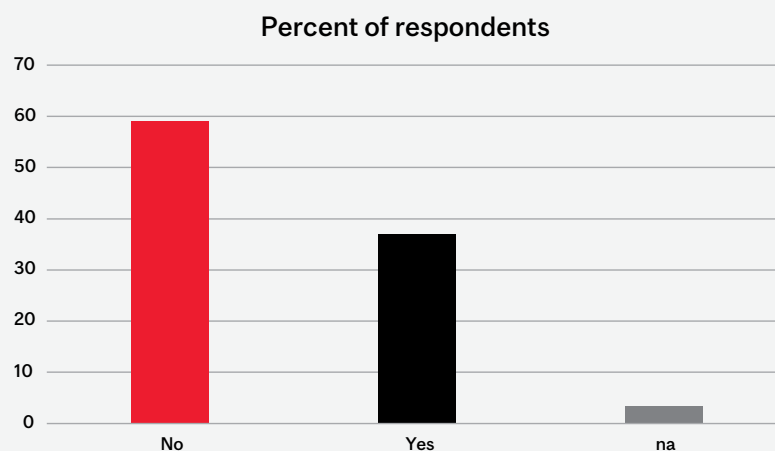
Participant Type

Minister	2
Presiding Officer	3
Member of Parliament	17
Clerk	26
Parliamentary Staff	40
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	5
Other	2
No Answer	5
TOTAL	100

66% of respondents indicated they were parliamentary staff, 22% were Members and the remainder a mix of parliamentary training institute staff and representatives from the UNDP and international donor agencies. The range of Members from Presiding Officers, Ministers and back benchers means that a spectrum of views have been obtained. Similarly for parliamentary staff, responses have been received from Clerks/Secretaries General and Clerks supporting Committees, Hansard Reporters and other parliamentary staff.

Question 2:

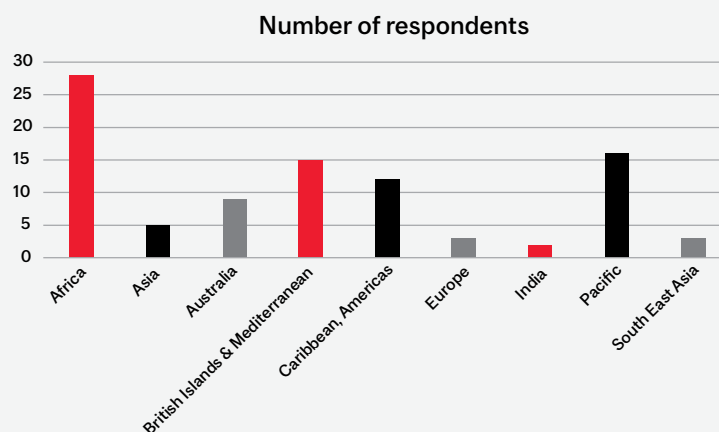
Has your position / job title changed since you took the Program at McGill?



Fifty nine percent of respondents indicated that their position/job title had not changed since taking the programme and 37% of respondents indicated their titles had changed since taking the program.

Question 3:

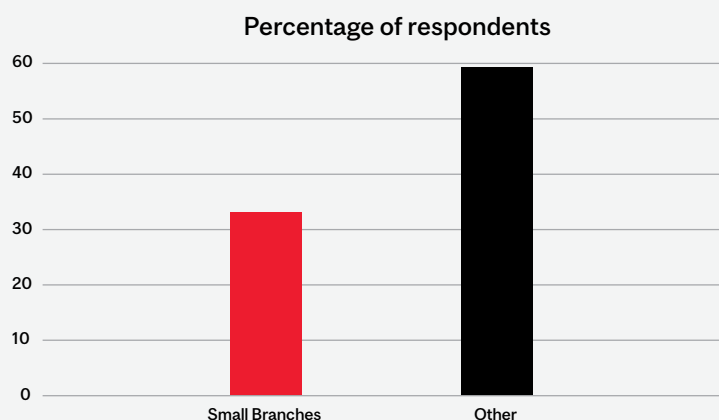
What region do you come from?



Respondents came from all nine regions of the Commonwealth with 28 from Africa, 16 from the Pacific and 15 from the British Islands and Mediterranean region. Other respondents came from countries outside the Commonwealth, principally from Eastern Europe (Kosovo) and South-East Asia (Myanmar). This wide and diverse range of jurisdictions covers large populous countries, small island developing states as well as national/sub national legislatures.

Question 4:

Do you come from a Small Branch/Other Branch?

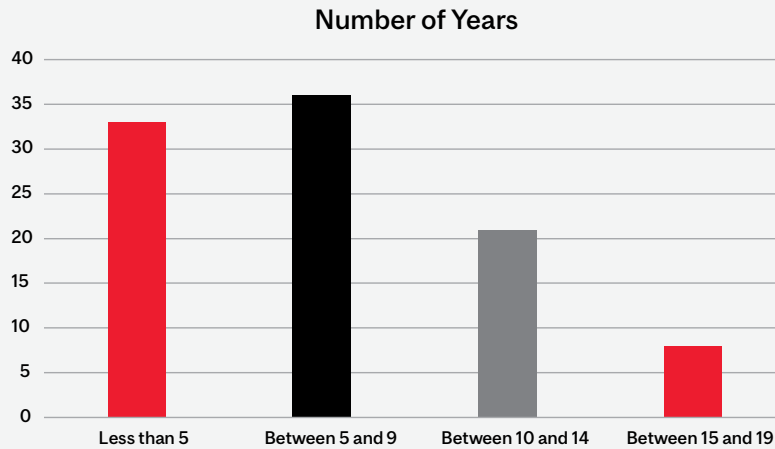


Thirty two respondents indicated they were from a Commonwealth Small Branch and 59 respondents indicated they were from other jurisdictions. The Small Branches include a range of jurisdictions from independent countries to devolved assemblies and British Overseas Dependent Territories, all with populations less than 500,000¹.

¹The CPA Small Branches network represents the smallest jurisdictions in all regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to identify their particular needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation. CPA has since 1981 held Small Branches Conferences for Members from more than 30 jurisdictions with populations of up to a current ceiling of 500,000 people.

Question 5:

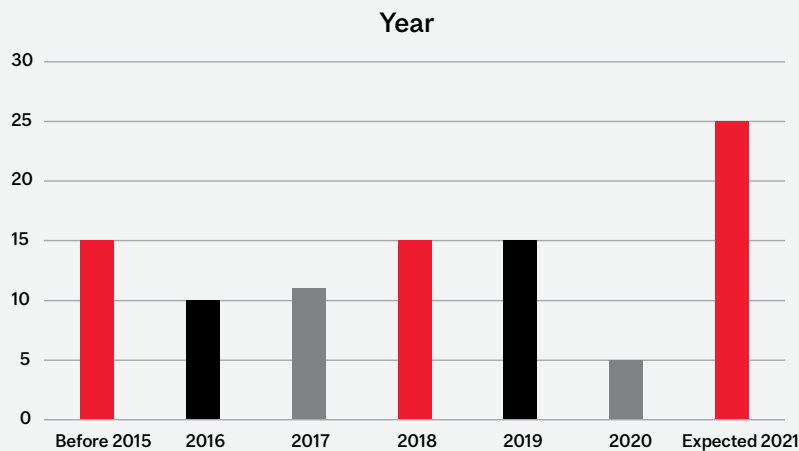
How many years of experience/service in your parliament?



The majority of respondents were in the early to mid-stages of their parliamentary careers with 36% indicating they had worked in Parliament between 5 and 9 years and 33% less than 5 years. Almost a third of respondents had more than 10 years of working in Parliament.

Question 6:

In what year did you complete the McGill Professional Development program?



Twenty five percent of respondents indicated they were expected to complete the program in 2021. 16% of respondents completed the program prior to 2015 and there were respondents from each year of the program between 2016 and 2020.

Question 7:

What is/are the principal benefit(s) you obtained from participating in the program?

Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Presiding Officer	"A much better understanding of the role and importance of the Committee system in Parliaments. An increase awareness of Parliamentary Leadership Role of Presiding Officers and other leaders in Parliament."
Member of Parliament/Senator	<p>"Meeting fellow Parliamentarians, building constructive and long-lasting engagement."</p> <p>"A clearer comparator against other parliaments, a better understanding of the parliamentary process and an ability to critique our own system, challenge and improve where needed."</p> <p>"The program provided a clear understanding of the role of a parliamentarian in the development of legislation and participation in the governance process. It also highlighted the importance of community involvement in the legislative process and ways in which you can make what happens in parliament more relatable to the average citizens, thereby getting more persons involved in the democratic process."</p>
Clerk	<p>"It broadened my scope on major parliamentary responsibilities from global perspectives and best practices."</p> <p>"An excellent grounding in parliamentary theory. This has really benefitted me after my move from researcher to committee clerk - I was thrown into this role with no training so I have drawn heavily on the theory - especially from the Committees module - to help inform how I go about my work."</p> <p>"Also, the relationships formed with colleagues around the world have been absolutely invaluable. We keep in touch, share good practice and have learned so much from each other. The residential was instrumental in this."</p> <p>"Sharing practical experiences from colleagues in other jurisdictions across the globe. Above all I established networks with parliamentary staff whom we have been in touch ever since and continue to exchange ideas on emerging trends in our stations of work".</p> <p>"The residential component was great with colleagues from other jurisdictions making it all the more enriching with their diverse experiences."</p> <p>"Vast experience obtained from the module materials, discussions from other participants that contributed to learning environment on Parliamentary Issues. I have learnt new things on the role and powers of parliamentary committees, how to form committees, different current parliamentary matters like the role of parliament vs other organs of the state, and also how Parliament can improve the budget process as part of the public financial management."</p> <p>"I was able to put into actions some applicable recommendations from attending the McGill Training and this has shaped our work to be more efficient and effective in ensuring that our Members of Parliament are given priority in executing their mandated roles."</p> <p>"Firm understanding of parliamentary processes in different parliaments; a commonality in the problems faced by those parliaments and potential solutions to those problems. Also, solutions shouldn't be constrained by familiarity with and reliance on current processes/procedures - creativity should be encouraged."</p> <p>"Given that we are a small legislature, it was very beneficial to learn about best practices in other parliaments. Because of tradition, or because of the lack of opportunity for movement within the institution, things sometimes are done a certain way, "because they always have been", not because it is best for the institution. It was enlightening to hear other perspectives."</p> <p>"Access to world class academic materials."</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Parliamentary Staff	<p>"I was able to learn what is obtainable in other countries parliament without visiting and this has helped me tremendously."</p> <p>"Areas of Corporate Management and its relation to the day-to-day operation of parliament. Importance of organisational beliefs and values to the strategic planning process."</p> <p>"The challenges, issues faced and success stories from the various Parliaments. The similarities to our situation and how we can adapt what best fits us."</p> <p>"This was an excellent program in terms of broadening horizons in terms of Parliamentary services. I gained a lot of technical knowledge from this program. It was also a great opportunity to share experiences and benchmark against other Pacific Parliaments best practices so we do not have to reinvent the wheel. The Pacific countries have similar parliamentary set ups so it was good to learn where we can leverage off each other."</p> <p>"During the two (2) years program I had the chance to improve my skills, such as on research and IT, communication – Parliament and Media, Public Financial Management, Strategic planning, Parliamentary governance, etc."</p> <p>"I have benefitted immensely by being able to apply all I have learnt in McGill and align them the practice and proceedings in my Parliament. It has exposed me more to the Parliamentary rudiments in my organisation even outside my work schedule thereby equipping me to be able to perfectly work in the core legislative functions"</p> <p>"Faculty members gave good and insightful input/feedback on the weekly Discussion Threads to increase our knowledge."</p>
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	<p>"I learnt a lot on how online courses are packaged."</p> <p>"I made good networks with other participants and the faculty who took us through the programme we used some of the knowledge in improving training of our committees."</p>
Other	<p>"Insight into the management aspects of parliament, as my previous experience was more political and development oriented."</p>

Respondents identified a number of principal benefits obtained from participating in the programs including improved theoretical understanding of Parliament and its democratic governance role and responsibilities, as well as exposure to developments in parliamentary practice from around the world. Respondents stated that they applied the knowledge gained to their own work in their own Parliaments to improve the legislative, representative and oversight functions of Parliament as well as the corporate governance of the institution itself. Members and parliamentary staff alike acknowledged the benefit of the face-to-face component of the program to their formal and informal learning and to the establishment of a network of contacts for continued professional development.

Question 8:

Were you able to apply what you learned in the program to your work in parliament?

Of the 100 respondents, 85 answered 'yes', 10 answered 'no' and 5 indicated 'not applicable'. This high level of application would indicate the practical applicability of the learning from the programs to the work of Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff.

Question 9:

Please give some examples of what you were able to implement.

Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Minister	<p>“Social media campaigns. Consultations with constituents”</p> <p>“I participated constructively to most debates and actively presented questions to ministers on matters affecting the smooth running of the government.”</p>
Presiding Officer	<p>“These are some of the things I was able to do:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Rules and regulations regardless of political affiliations.-Better interaction with the various political factions.-Develop partnerships with other territories.”
Member of Parliament/Senator	<p>“The importance of scrutiny- it is our collective responsibility to study and ask questions as we represent constituents who voted us in.”</p> <p>“- Push for removing ministerial control and ability to override decisions of independent bodies - we have recently explored changes to parole based on this.</p> <p>- introduction of a crown dependencies plenary to benchmark against each other.”</p> <p>“Following our October McGill module, I have brought forward my proposition regarding Policy Development Board which has been discussed and partly adopted.”</p> <p>“I have been able to take what I learned and observe various failings in our current government. We have an election coming ...and the lessons learned have formed the basis of our governance policy. We hope to be in a position after the election to implant a number of fundamental reforms.”</p> <p>“I commissioned a paper on addressing the democratic deficit [in our jurisdiction].”</p> <p>“During estimates I was able to bring learnings from other jurisdictions into the format for our sessions.”</p> <p>“Ideas for empowering our parliament and being more critical of the way Parliament functions. There is a need for a review of the structure of parliament and its relationship with the executive branch so that its oversight functions are enhanced. This would be work for the future. Things which were useful include communication techniques.”</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Clerk	<p>“I feel what I have learned has helped me bring innovation to my parliament as I have learned to raise the bar on the witnesses we call, make greater efforts to engage the public and marginalised groups, than may have traditionally been the case. I feel the work of parliament often relies on the usual suspects. This has taught me to think more widely, more inclusively and involve the public more, and highlight the benefits of this to Members.”</p> <p>“I was able to provide parliamentary staff with the knowledge of how an effective parliamentary committee can operate, including focusing on the establishment, functions, powers, procedures, needs and related issues that governs committees. Quite similar to tables office for providing scripts for Speaker and the Secretary-General dossiers, a standard script was also developed for the Committee Chairs for when public hearings are being conducted particularly when it is broadcasted live. Additionally, conducting an effective committee inquiry in the view of holding a hearing on national/ pressing issues, developing an inquiry plan and costings, formulation of quality Terms of Reference for the Committee inquiries etc.”</p> <p>“I am now better able to assist Members with public hearings and help them and my other colleagues to come up with workable strategies regarding the work of committees. We as staff also managed to sell the idea of Members to use mobile phones and tablets. In this regard we drove home the message for Members of our House use their tabled when making contributions in the House and it is bearing fruits. Another step further is that Members are now submitting their speeches to the Hansard through email using their tablets.”</p> <p>“Have used what I learned to develop a research service in my own parliament and shared some of the learning with a colleague in another jurisdiction”</p> <p>“The characteristics of a good Parliamentary Researcher. These learnings were directly applied on a personal level and assisted in improving my capacity to undertake research.”</p> <p>“In our Committees Unit, we have now beefed up our staffing - we have 6 Standing Committees and now we have 3 dedicated staff in each of these Committees. To put some perspective into this, prior to this, we used to have only 5 staff in total to service all the 6 Standing Committees. We have also enhanced the capacity of our Research Unit as well as our ITC Unit.”</p>
Parliamentary Staff	<p>“Modelling various options for enhanced budget review by parliament including establishment of a parliamentary budget office.”</p> <p>“I now have a better understanding of the committee process likewise the role of each committee staff. The course has helped provide a better research support to committees and how to analyse information in a synthetic way to assist Members in the committee process.”</p> <p>“We have introduced peer-review of our research products (briefs, research papers and transactional information). We are in the process of integrated a peer-review system into our research work guidelines and processes. This is part of the quality control requirement of a parliamentary service.”</p> <p>“The corporate governance model inspired me to work with my immediate supervisor to design the corporate governance manual which is before the parliamentary commission for consideration.”</p> <p>“1. During the crafting of our Strategic Plan, I was able to make concrete meaningful contribution to the document and also provide guidance where needed.</p> <p>2. Have also made some valuable contribution during the review of the National Assembly organizational structure.</p> <p>3. I have also submitted a proposal to restructure our communication division, which is still under consideration.”</p> <p>“While in meetings in my office with my colleagues, I see myself explaining better.”</p> <p>“Looking at more automated approaches to manual research processes.</p> <p>Maintaining online database.”</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	<p>“Used the techniques for parliamentary research to improve upon my research for writing reports, concept papers, proposals and other write ups which are both related to my work and personal.”</p> <p>“Helped me introduce Higher National Diploma in Parliamentary Studies.</p> <p>Chaired the 5-person team that produced Committee Clerks Operations Manual.”</p>
Other	<p>“Input on corporate governance was very useful for institutional strengthening programming on which I am working.”.</p>

Respondents who were Presiding Officers were able to improve impartiality in their role and contribute to international parliamentary diplomacy. Ministers were able to improve consultations with constituents, use social media and enhance their contributions to parliamentary debates.

Respondents who were Members of Parliament were better able to identify weaknesses in their own parliamentary practices, improve the independence of Parliament and their ability to hold Government Ministers to account. Members used their learning to improve the Questions they asked, their contribution to Budget debates, their defence of reports from independent bodies, and in one case a Member was able to propose the introduction of a new ‘Policy Development Board’.

Respondents who were Clerks were able to practically apply their learning to improve:

- **Committee and Inquiry functioning** – enhanced planning/costing, Terms of Reference, scripts for Chairs, ensuring a wide range of witnesses are called to give evidence;
- **Hansard reporting** - Members able now to submit speeches to Hansard via tablets provided by Parliament
- **Research Services** – improved research techniques and shared research service development plans with other Parliaments
- **Staffing** – ensured standing committees now have dedicated staff and increasing IT technical staff.

Respondents who were Parliamentary Staff were able to practically apply their learning to improve:

- **Parliamentary Budget Office** – established specialist budget support in Parliament
- **Committees** – established clear roles for each staff member working for a Committee
- **Research** - introduced quality control by having peer-review of research products and enhanced used of ITC in research
- **Corporate Governance** – drafted a corporate governance manual for consideration by the parliamentary commission and made contributions towards Parliament’s new Strategic Plan
- **Communications** – submitted a proposal for a Communications Strategy for Parliament and restructure the Communications Division.



Question 10:

How could we make the program even more relevant to future participants?

Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Minister	"Post elections /governance - working with opposition on critical matters."
Presiding Officer	"My recommendation would be for participants to undertake one initiative of change within their parliament that can yield results by the end of the course." "In addition to the week Montreal Classes, we should add zoom meeting and class discussions." "Involve former graduates in Program in some way. Maybe to make presentation at Montreal Week."
Member of Parliament/Senator	"One of the key benefits for me was meeting members from other countries. Many of us have continued to stay in contact. I believe there would be benefit in a follow up meeting online 6-12 months following the conference." "I would like to see more session around Policy developments." "There could be some scope to consider whether "small parliaments" and "large parliaments" is the best split in terms of course. Whilst of course, small parliaments from various Commonwealth countries have a lot in common, there is still a huge difference in the maturation of parliaments from the various countries." "Include more politicians to share experience and debate with participants. Academics tend to talk more on theory while politicians are more practical." "I think as it is it's still the best." "The program was well organized. More examples of best practices to assist parliamentarians to develop these structures in their parliaments if they do not exist. Example - the role of a parliamentarian in oversight committees." "Timing - try to get members very early on in their parliamentary experience."

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Clerk	<p>“For me and I suppose colleagues from developing jurisdictions, a course on how to assist parliamentary staff to facilitate the main political parties to transition their party manifestos into legislative agenda would be useful”</p> <p>“The residential was definitely worth keeping in my opinion - due to the value of working with and forming relationships with colleagues around the world.”</p> <p>“Identifying best procedural matters, compare and contrast regional and international practices and developing ideas that can help keep our parliament modern and adapt to the dynamic environment and challenges.”</p> <p>“Parliamentary Research, if possible, can be further expanded. I understand that most parliaments have capacity issues and financial constraints. However, considering the fact that researchers should be able to develop quality research materials by specializing in fields of the ‘sciences’ in order to provide independent research briefs or advice to Members and staff.”</p> <p>“I liked that participants came from different countries and regions... This gave us an opportunity to exchange views from different perspectives and appreciate that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Even best practices may differ in application depending on the country and the unique challenges or context of each Parliament. I hope that this will continue in the future. I think the programme has also benefitted from having practitioners rather than academics as lecturers, content providers and moderators. It makes the discussion and suggestions much more practical and less theoretical. One suggestion is perhaps having more guest speakers from different parts of the Commonwealth who actually work in the Parliament presenting on a unique topic from the region or country.”</p> <p>“Perhaps seeking input from potential future participants about what issues they would find most useful, as these change over time. For example, at the moment changing to digital rather than face-to-face working has significantly changed how we work. There have been benefits as well as challenges. The key is how to keep the positive and more effective ways of working introduced, whilst understanding how these changes the culture of the organisation.”</p> <p>“Parliaments could be approached to submit areas they feel the program can cover. However, I should mention that the driving factor is your passion for the work of parliament.”</p> <p>“Increase the amount of interactive content, especially the Zoom seminars. Maybe some audio lectures in podcast format, which you could listen to while commuting?”</p> <p>“Engage more visuals in presentations/modules. Too much words for some of us can be difficult to comprehend. Visual presentations are more likely to have a better impact.”</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Clerk	<p>“I feel what I have learned has helped me bring innovation to my parliament as I have learned to raise the bar on the witnesses we call, make greater efforts to engage the public and marginalised groups, than may have traditionally been the case. I feel the work of parliament often relies on the usual suspects. This has taught me to think more widely, more inclusively and involve the public more, and highlight the benefits of this to Members.”</p> <p>“I was able to provide parliamentary staff with the knowledge of how an effective parliamentary committee can operate, including focusing on the establishment, functions, powers, procedures, needs and related issues that governs committees. Quite similar to tables office for providing scripts for Speaker and the Secretary-General dossiers, a standard script was also developed for the Committee Chairs for when public hearings are being conducted particularly when it is broadcasted live. Additionally, conducting an effective committee inquiry in the view of holding a hearing on national/ pressing issues, developing an inquiry plan and costings, formulation of quality Terms of Reference for the Committee inquiries etc.”</p> <p>“I am now better able to assist Members with public hearings and help them and my other colleagues to come up with workable strategies regarding the work of committees. We as staff also managed to sell the idea of Members to use mobile phones and tablets. In this regard we drove home the message for Members of our House use their tabled when making contributions in the House and it is bearing fruits. Another step further is that Members are now submitting their speeches to the Hansard through email using their tablets.”</p> <p>“Have used what I learned to develop a research service in my own parliament and shared some of the learning with a colleague in another jurisdiction”</p> <p>“The characteristics of a good Parliamentary Researcher. These learnings were directly applied on a personal level and assisted in improving my capacity to undertake research.”</p> <p>“In our Committees Unit, we have now beefed up our staffing - we have 6 Standing Committees and now we have 3 dedicated staff in each of these Committees. To put some perspective into this, prior to this, we used to have only 5 staff in total to service all the 6 Standing Committees. We have also enhanced the capacity of our Research Unit as well as our ITC Unit.”</p>
Parliamentary Staff	<p>“Extend the time for the face-to-face component and include more practical exercises and allow participants to make presentations or share their experiences.”</p> <p>“For the online component, it would be good to use a more user-friendly system for discussions or interactions between course participations and instructors. The system should be similar in nature, form and usability to social media platforms that most people use today.”</p> <p>“Include practical exercises, which would be carried out under the guidance of the lecturers on the programme, such as preparing a strategic plan for the parliament, annual report for the parliament, committee reports, briefing papers for parliamentary committees, economic/financial briefings. The availability of templates for these outputs would be a most useful resource for parliamentary staff.”</p> <p>“Have more trainers who are practitioners and maybe include some experience from the African countries.”</p> <p>“Maintain an active database/platform to facilitate parliamentary knowledge/experience sharing among participants.”</p> <p>“More online communications between participants, word limit on discussion posts.”</p> <p>“To include the program: How to write the Proceedings of the House and Minutes of Parliamentary Standing Committees.”</p> <p>“To be honest I feel the program provided during 2020 has been incredibly relevant. I would hope that any program moving forward would always have the online discussion forum as a regular feature.”</p> <p>“Conflict management, negotiations, and managing different interest groups need to be added especially for hung parliaments or for parliaments without an ultimate majority. In a parliament where there is dynamic tension, officers of the House have to have a piece of working knowledge of the above conflict resolution mechanisms”</p> <p>“Have a previous participant speak at the week in class via video link about what they’ve applied at their parliament.”</p>
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	<p>“Build an alumni and have country representatives to support the good work at McGill”</p>

Respondents who were **Members** suggested to: include alumni of the course and Members to lead some sessions, introduce additional face-to-face opportunities, podcasts, visuals in the presentations and remote group interaction after the residency; introduce a tangible personal change for Parliament for each participant at the start to be completed by the end of the programme and do more on policy development. Others felt there should be no change to the current programme.

Parliamentary Staff also had a wide range of suggestions to: include a session on how to assist Members translate their party manifestos to a legislative agenda; how to manage conflict in Parliament and managing different interest groups; include a session on how to maintain a modern and dynamic Parliament that keeps up with developments of parliamentary practice globally; expand the parliamentary research component of the programme; introduce more guest speakers from around the world who work in Parliament and can speak to unique/ innovative parliamentary practices from their jurisdictions; address the post-COVID reality of working digitally and address the impact this change will have on the culture of the organization, and maintain an active database/platform to facilitate parliamentary knowledge/experience sharing among participants.

In terms of course delivery parliamentary staff suggested to: extend the time for the face-to-face component, include more practical exercises such as preparing a strategic plan/annual report/financial briefing and minutes of Committee meetings; allow participants to make presentations or share their experiences; use more user-friendly systems for discussions or interactions between course participations and instructors for the online component; more online communications between participants, and include alumni remotely to contribute the teaching of the programme.

Question 11:

Do you have any other comments about the program?

Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Minister	<p>It was very interesting to realize despite geographic locations of most countries, our issues were similar.</p> <p>The program really helped in my career and I wish I could attend the training second time around because such courses are not taught in tertiary institutions.</p>
Presiding Officer	<p>I truly appreciated the program which provided me with deep understanding of democracy and good governance. I am very clear on initiatives that must be undertaken by political parties and politicians. The need for parliamentary reform for openness in Committees and public airing of proceedings is understood.</p> <p>“This is indeed a wonderful programme. There should be an advance class that may even reward a fully credited Certificate/Diploma (paid for by the participants or their Parliament).”</p> <p>“It was very interesting and covered a vast number of practices and knowledge.”</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
<p>Member of Parliament/ Senator</p>	<p>“It was an excellent opportunity to share resource, but I do feel a lot of it could have been done via video link (now we are all au fait) allowing wider participation, and reducing costs. Perhaps a mixed model some attend live, and some virtually?”</p> <p>“It was very helpful for me as a new member, I think it’s important to do this course during the first 18 months in the Parliament.”</p> <p>“The educators were all very engaging and the participants were all very enthusiastic. It was an intense week (particularly as we had flown in from Australia and the time difference did have an impact) but I enjoyed all aspects of the program.”</p> <p>“Excellent and well run. Very informative.”</p> <p>“I thoroughly enjoyed the course and I truly appreciate the efforts of all those involved.”</p> <p>“A superb programme led by an excellent team. Being at McGill was an honour. I want to return.”</p> <p>“The program is excellent and I am pleased to say that it helped me and empowered me.”</p> <p>“It was enlightening in making me aware of the importance of parliamentary scrutiny and the need to have the correct structures in place to provide balance to a strong executive.”</p> <p>“I have recommended it to a number of others. Some of the connections I made during the course have continued, which has been a wonderful additional benefit.”</p>
<p>Clerk</p>	<p>“The programme remains commendable and one of the best.”</p> <p>“It is a practical and functional program that instantly impacts on perspectives and disposition consequently fundamentally influencing how one works and I would not have any hesitation in recommending the program to anyone with a future in parliamentary management.”</p> <p>“Just thank you, the residential was the best week of my working life, and the programme has really helped me in my role and I think in time that will filter into the Assembly more widely.”</p> <p>“There are few good and effective study programmes for parliamentary staff and McGill’s is the only one we know of that is holistic and practical, covering topics ranging from parliamentary administration, management to governance. The programme is delivered by practitioners who have worked in a Parliament setting and who are able to offer pragmatic insights and suggestions. The discussions also benefit from having participants from all over the world adding to the richness and variety of views and perspectives.”</p> <p>“It provides invaluable insights into parliamentary work.”</p> <p>“Could McGill University can reach out to the Pacific countries for more continuous programs.”</p> <p>“I enjoyed the class interaction and range of speakers the course offered.</p> <p>I understand it has now gone 100% online - and not only due to Covid. In my opinion this is a mistake - meeting colleagues from around the world is a key part of the learning; discussing the challenges we all face and finding out about others’ solutions.”</p> <p>“The residency week involved a lot of travelling but was simply invaluable in terms of developing great working relationships with officers from other legislatures.”</p> <p>“A well packaged professional program that had not only widen my scope of study but had further equipped me for future greater challenges.”</p> <p>“Overall, I really appreciate the mode through which the programme was delivered - with my hectic work schedule in the Parliament, the lay-out of the programme actually allowed me to balance both my work and the programme coursework.”</p>

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Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
<p>Parliamentary Staff</p>	<p>“No”</p> <p>“The course really should be introduced to senior management of Parliament staff since they will be the ones who are making big decision in the running of the office and also with the Parliamentarians.</p> <p>I would recommend it for all middle level managers in any National Assembly.”</p> <p>“Program was a good blend of different participants from diverse countries. It was a memorable experience for me.</p> <p>I would be a keen participant for any other program of this series.”</p> <p>“Overall an excellent program! I believe it is the only parliamentary-specific professional development and accredited course offered at university/tertiary level that all parliamentary staff in the Commonwealth should take.”</p> <p>“Thinking global and acting local. This was an excellent program because we learnt through the excellent facilitators that we had the many things we never knew before the program. I was very fortunate to be part of the program. The best practices of other big parliaments with similar set ups to the Pacific, we got to learn, appreciate and applied to our local contexts. It was also a good opportunity to bring the program to the Pacific so that more people can attend and make the most of the opportunity. It will be a good idea for McGill to continue this program in the Pacific so that we can capacity build more people to serve parliaments.”</p> <p>“Being involved in policy work and the development and writing of material in the Core Business of Parliament, I have specific proposals around the possible inclusion of the following Courses or Modules, for example:</p> <p>Rules, Practice and Procedure in the House; The Legislative Process; Legal Drafting; Committee Procedures, Practice and Systems; Oversight and Accountability; Public Participation/Involvement; International Relations and Protocol.”</p> <p>“It is very rich in content. Every Parliament staff should consider undertaking.”</p> <p>“This is a great program and the first one that is real tailor-made for parliament staff. It helps those with interests in parliamentary affairs and as such must continue.”</p> <p>“I have found the program to be of immense value in opening my eyes to the constant challenges our democracies face in a rapidly changing world.</p> <p>“From a concept level perspective, the program made parliamentary management plain and simple, and from a practitioner standpoint, the program made managing parliament pure and applied.”</p> <p>“Really enjoyed it, and the readings were very interesting and relevant, great how information from participating countries are used in examples and readings.”</p> <p>“The program gave me the opportunity to learn from the best professionals and fellow colleagues from other parliaments across the Commonwealth which in real life would not be possible. It is such a privilege.”</p> <p>“For Parliaments, it is difficult to find training programmes/courses for our Staff on parliamentary proceedings and management. The McGill course is a rare find and very helpful. Thank you for conducting the much-needed course.”</p>
<p>Parliamentary Training Institute Staff</p>	<p>“It is a very informative program for providing a platform for experience sharing among participants and greater exposure into what works best for parliaments.”</p> <p>“The Courses could be bound into booklets for other Parliaments and Parliamentary Staff/MPs who will no doubt find them very resourceful. The quality of your resource persons and materials are quite commendable.”</p>

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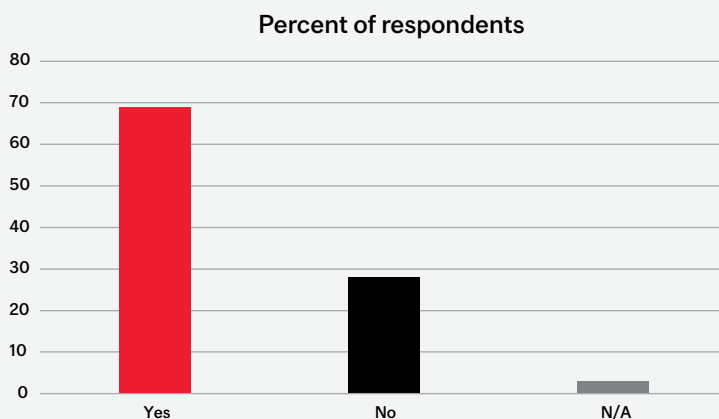
Illustrative Sample of Responses

Participant Type	
Other	"It was some time ago but at the time I would have suggested more multi-media content to be added alongside readings; more flexibility in the long-term programming to complete in a shorter or longer timeframe (I think I started to miss deadlines by the end); and varied ways to submit assignments, looking at how there can be an ongoing networking component rather than applying lessons in one parliament - the latter point probably comes from my perspective as a practitioner rather than parliamentary staff."

Members and parliamentary staff all found the programs to be excellent, empowering and greatly valued the opportunity offered by McGill University as a world renowned first-class academic institution. The program provided a unique professional opportunity unlike any other as it combined theory and practice, and is taught by academics as well as practitioners. This is enhanced by the learning from fellow parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from other jurisdictions and the realisation that challenges are similar and solutions can be shared and adapted to suit local circumstances. Whilst some felt the course benefits greatly from the face to face component, some others felt in future more would have to be taught remotely given the post-COVID reality. Parliamentary staff were particularly appreciative of the practical applicability and tangible benefits of the programme to their day-to-day work. It could be said that McGill University has constantly improved the Program year on year, kept the Program relevant and increased demand for such Programs.

Question 12:

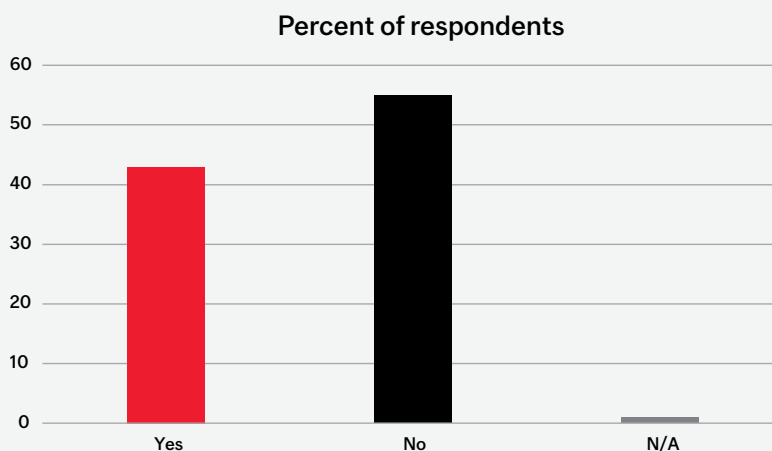
Have you remained in contact with other participants in your program?



Sixty nine percent of respondents indicated that they remained in contact with other participants from the program while 28% of participants indicated they had not. Given that many respondents cited the benefits of engagement with fellow Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from other jurisdictions, one could infer that that the course established a professional network for alumni of the program. Without the program this continuous professional network would not have been established.

Question 13:

Are you aware of McGill University's parliamentary LinkedIn group, designed to foster enhanced communications with MPs and parliamentary staff around the world?



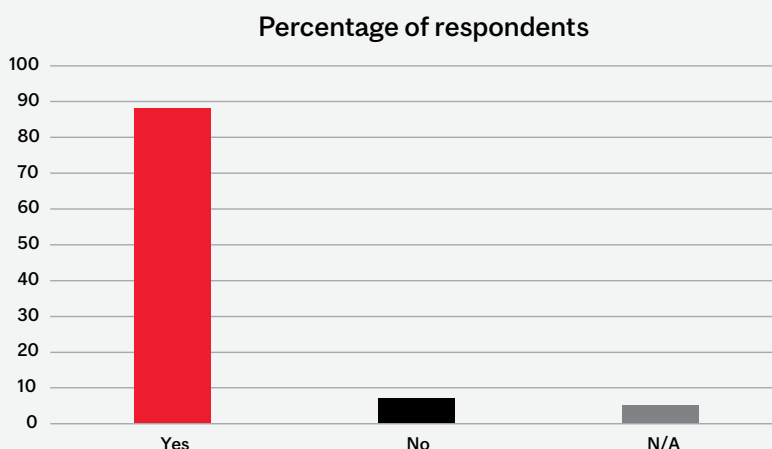
Fifty five percent of respondents are unaware of the McGill University's parliamentary LinkedIn group designed to foster enhanced communication with Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff around the world. There remains an opportunity to encourage alumni to join the Group given the platform is free to join and allows members to keep abreast of developments, take part in discussions, ask questions and start conversations with fellow alumni globally².



² Current and former participants, and others, are invited to join at: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8610151>

Question 14:

We are considering holding occasional regional discussion groups via zoom. If we did so, would you be interested in participating?



Eighty eight percent of respondents would be interested in participating in occasional regional discussion groups via zoom. This would seem indicate the continued interest in McGill University continuing to facilitate remote engagement on a regional basis and perhaps solicit views of priority topics to be addressed periodically³.

Question 15:

How could McGill University and its partners assist your parliament in the future?

Selected Responses

Participant Type	
Minister	"Research support." "Continue train more MPs from my parliament."
Presiding Officer	"Assistance in creating an orientation manual for new members would be helpful." "Holding of webinars on particular issues of governance and functioning of committees would also be helpful." "Webinars on creating a gender sensitive parliament utilizing women leaders from Rwanda, UK and Caribbean would be highly relevant."

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³In response to these responses, McGill University held an online three-lecture series on "The Role of Parliaments in Curbing Corruption" in February-March 2021; it was attended by more than 100 former participants and others. Notice of future activities will be emailed to participants, and posted on the McGill Parliamentary LinkedIn site (see footnote 2 on previous page)

Selected Responses

Participant Type	
Member of Parliament/ Senator	<p>“Perhaps explore the option of a tailored program for our parliament that can be delivered online or by local educators so that all newly elected parliamentarians can access the benefits of education like this. At the moment, due to funding and limited places, only a few newly elected parliamentarians can access the course.”</p> <p>“Advanced programs for more established members. I find that even though some members have been in parliament for many years, they lack an understanding of the basic concepts of good governance.”</p> <p>“I would be interested in a second level course that goes deeper into public administration or parliamentary scrutiny/reform - ideally held in the summer recess.”</p> <p>“Anything on effective communication would be very useful.”</p>
Clerk	<p>“Effective and efficient collaboration with UNDP Fiji Office for future McGill Courses Opportunities.”</p> <p>“Provide short course/seminars and leaflets on Parliamentary matters”</p> <p>“Workshops/lectures via zoom or other applications as current new global normal may probably not allow face to face meetings.”</p> <p>“It would be good for our Parliament staff to join in webinar sessions organised by McGill, not necessarily to present but to sit in and listen to Parliamentary topics/sessions.”</p> <p>“By continuing to offer the Parliamentary Management course”</p>
Parliamentary Staff	<p>“Running relevant short courses and parliamentary attachment to other advance countries parliament.”</p> <p>“The prestigious McGill was my dream for studying in. Being there as a parliamentary staff member was a unforgettable experience.”</p> <p>“More of the parliamentary program offered for Members and staff of the Fiji Parliament and the Pacific Island Parliaments. There are a lot of young people joining the Parliament secretariat and having more of these courses either through short courses or webinars will assist these new staff to learn more about parliamentary practices and what is expected of them in delivering their roles as parliament secretariats.”</p> <p>“Continue to provide relevant programs. As a participant, I am grateful to attend these courses and I am looking forward to the last course to complete the program.”</p> <p>“Introduce more comparative studies in parliamentary studies”</p> <p>“McGill University and its partners could able to assist by sharing the innovations, best practices, reports, research findings, case study etc. regarding parliamentary matters among the participants.”</p> <p>“You could assist with parliamentary reform.”</p> <p>“I am strongly advocating my Parliament continue to offer this course to staff in the future.”</p> <p>“I would be grateful for McGill University to come over to Solomon Islands and provide training for the staff of the National Parliament.”</p>
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	<p>“We need to continue partnering under the MOU that we have and engage in areas like hosting joint research projects, conferences and publications on parliamentary issues as well as assisting us in developing online courses at our centre...”</p>
Other	<p>Online training that could be drawn on for various purposes using expertise + alumni</p>



Respondents who were Members indicated that McGill University and its partners could assist Parliaments in the future to:

- Continue training **Members**- potentially creating bespoke programs⁴ for individual Parliaments in collaboration with local educators/partners; create an advanced programme for more established Members or one that goes deeper into public administration or parliamentary reform; hold webinars on issues of concern to the parliamentary community;

Presiding Officers suggest assistance could be provided to:

- Develop an orientation manual for Members;
- Provide support with research and enhance communication training.

Respondents who were **Parliamentary Staff** indicated McGill and its partners could assist Parliament in the future to:

- Continue training parliamentary staff to – work with individual Parliaments to create bespoke training programs and also work with the UNDP Pacific to formulate joint programs for the Pacific region;
- Use technology to provide short courses and webinars particularly for new and young staff; opportunities for attachments between Parliaments; and produce learning materials
- Introduce comparative parliamentary studies, facilitate the sharing of parliamentary innovations, assist with parliamentary reform,

Question 16:

What topics/issues would you like to see in future courses and programs?

Selected Responses

Participant Type	
Minister	Debates
Presiding Officer	<p>“The Course covered really important and relevant topics and issues. Additional information on creating parliamentary library, creating a curriculum for public education on parliamentary processes and procedures for the general public would enhance the curriculum.”</p> <p>“More on effective development of community/ constituency programmes. More on Open Government and how to get Civil Society involved in Parliament’s work.”</p>

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⁴ McGill University's School of Continuing Studies does offer customized and bespoke training, on demand. More details are available at: https://www.mcgill.ca/scs-parliament/files/scs-parliament/033-06-20-pd_customizedparliamentarytraining_flyer.pdf

Selected Responses

Participant Type	
Member of Parliament/ Senator	<p>“Other models of governance, equality, FOI laws.”</p> <p>“Developing Policies for Effective scrutiny”</p> <p>“Addressing the fear of transparency and openness.”</p> <p>“Understanding the role of good governance in improved outcomes.”</p> <p>“The democratic deficit and how it can be addressed”</p> <p>“More of the same!”</p> <p>“Effective communication.”</p>
Clerk	<p>“Managing investigative hearings: Expectations and challenges.”</p> <p>“Inter Parliamentary collaborations in Parliamentary administration/ management.”</p> <p>“Following Up of Outcomes of Oversight hearings.”</p> <p>“Public Accounts Committees/Oversight Committees.”</p> <p>“Combating Corruption.”</p> <p>“Having occasional on-line presentations and discussions are a great way of continual learning. The topics should be practical rather than esoteric and of wider application across many Parliaments, rather than just a country or region.”</p> <p>“McGill already has a ready pool of presenters from every cohort who are professional parliamentary staffers. There will be a few good papers each year that your lecturers can curate (and improve) for presentation by the staffers themselves.”</p> <p>“Management of Parliament especially the role of chief executive officers.”</p> <p>“Adapting parliaments to digital working.”</p> <p>“Best practice in use of social media.”</p> <p>“As a Clerk, my role also includes rephrasing Motions and Questions received from members. Some training in how to write proper motions and questions that are meaningful and questions that are not open-ended or as in a yes or no type of response.”</p>

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Selected Responses

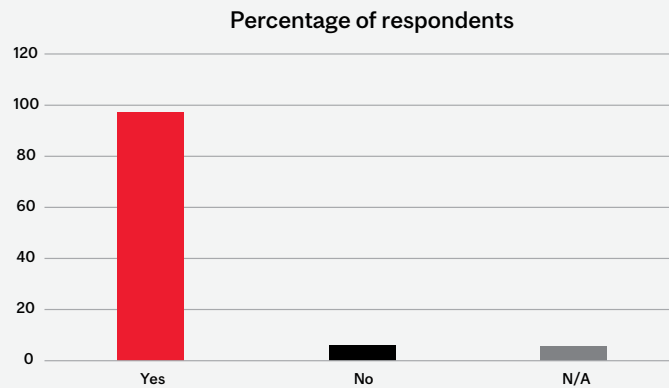
Participant Type	
Parliamentary Staff	<p>“Strengthening networks between parliaments.”</p> <p>“Business continuity during pandemic or natural disaster. Risk management in parliamentary settings.”</p> <p>“Parliamentary researchers should be given a chance to publish their research work in parliamentary journal may published under McGill”</p> <p>“I would like to see added to the programme a unit or topic on inter-parliamentary engagements. Due to globalization and the increased interaction between parliaments and MPs, and the many inter-parliamentary events happening, it would be good to have this component.”</p> <p>“The current topics offered are relevant to Parliament; the program is quite complete if I take into considerations all the courses.”</p> <p>“...the role of the independent parliamentary Budget offices and the Audit offices.”</p> <p>“Citizen engagement/participation in Parliament.”</p> <p>“Alignment of parliamentary rules in bicameral systems.”</p> <p>“Courses like Post-Legislative Scrutiny, Budgetary Processes, and Constituency Management...”</p> <p>“Parliamentary staff development, viz succession planning and/or upward mobility within the organization.”</p> <p>“Gender relations in the workplace at Parliament.”</p> <p>“Role of Committees... [and] of PAC</p> <p>“Parliament role in fighting corruption.”</p> <p>“Conflict Management and Resolution.”</p>
Parliamentary Training Institute Staff	<p>“Monitoring and evaluation (defining indicators for parliamentary committees’ work; results-based management).”</p> <p>“Managing parliaments in a crisis situation, enhancing parliamentary oversight, new paradigms in legislative research.”</p>
Other	<p>“Strengthened focus on representation and public participation looking at novel and emerging methods, e.g. Incorporation into parliament of models of deliberative democracy.”</p>

Respondents who were **Members** suggested a wide range of topics and issues to include in future courses and topics including: the establishment of a parliamentary library; a curriculum for public education on Parliament; effective constituency development programs; open government and inclusion of civil society in the work of Parliament and addressing the fear of transparency and openness; other governance models and the democratic deficit, equality and freedom of information laws, and effective communication.

Respondents who were **Parliamentary staff** also suggested a wide range of additional topics including: strengthening networks between parliaments; business continuity during crisis situations such as a pandemic or natural disaster; risk management in parliamentary setting; publication of research carried out by parliamentary researchers; the role of the independent Parliamentary Budget Offices and the Audit Offices; citizen engagement/participation in Parliament and innovations such as deliberative democracy; alignment of parliamentary rules in bicameral systems; post-legislative scrutiny, budgetary processes, and constituency management; parliamentary staff development, viz succession planning and/or upward mobility within the organization; gender relations in the workplace at Parliament; Parliament’s role in fighting corruption; results-based management for parliamentary committees, and conflict management and resolution.

Question 17:

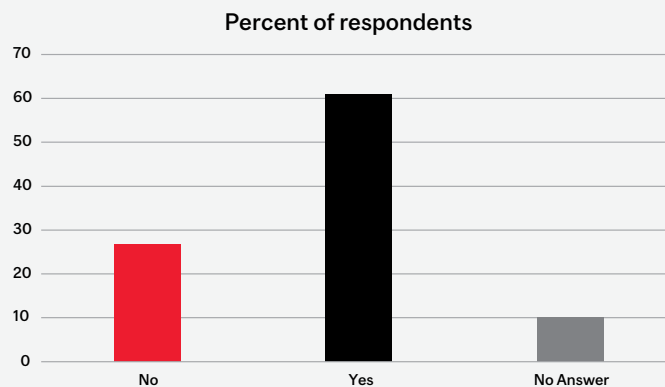
Were you able to share your experiences/learning with parliamentary colleagues?



Ninety-three per cent of respondents were able to share their experiences/learning with parliamentary colleagues. This high rate would seem to suggest that participants to the program were proactive and comfortable sharing their new knowledge with colleagues. An opportunity is created to look at the way work is carried out in Parliament through a refreshed lens for individual and organizational benefit.

Question 18:

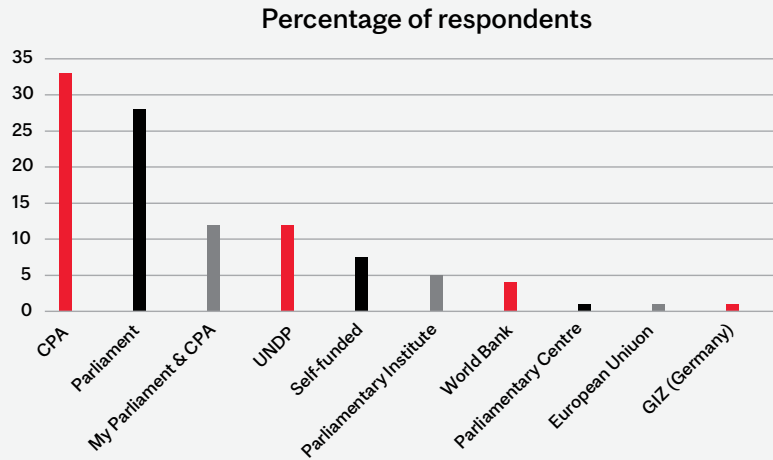
Was there a requirement to report back to your Parliament, via formal or informal information-sharing sessions, or other means?



Sixty two percent of respondents indicated that there was a formal requirement to report back to Parliament via formal or informal information sharing sessions or other means. (Whilst participants have always been encouraged to share information with parliamentary colleagues it is up to individual parliaments to determine whether this be a made a pre-condition of participation in the program.)

Question 19:

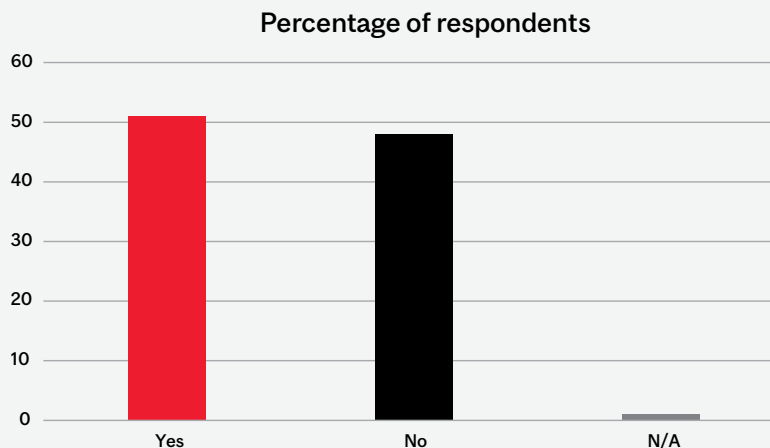
Who sponsored your participation in the Program?



A third of respondents indicated that the CPA sponsored their participation in the programme, 28% indicated sponsorship by parliament and 12% joint sponsorship between CPA and parliament. The UNDP sponsored 12% of participants and other sponsors included national parliamentary institutes, the World Bank, the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, the European Union, and GIZ (Germany).

Question 20:

Did your sponsoring organization require you to report back to them on your experience?



Half of respondents indicated that their sponsoring organizations required them to report back to them on their experiences and the other half of respondents indicated there was no requirement to do so. (For institutional accountability and continuity, it would be useful if respondents are required to report back on their experiences; however, this can only be determined by each sponsoring organization).

Alphabetical List of Countries

Anguilla	Fiji	Singapore
Australia	Jamaica	South Africa
Bahamas	Kenya	St. Helena
Bangladesh	Kosovo	Tanzania
Barbados	Myanmar	Trinidad and Tobago
Belize	Namibia	Turks and Caicos Islands
Bermuda	New Zealand	Uganda
Canada	Nigeria	United Kingdom
Cook Islands	Niue	Vanuatu
Denmark	Pakistan	Zambia
Dominica	Papua New Guinea	
Falkland Islands	Sierra Leone	



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