

# PARLIAMENT OFFICE

Parliament is the highest Court of the Land. Its procedures are based on the Westminster System and has three main functions:

- 1 – making laws governing the country;
- 2 – taking formal action to make available money for the needs of the State, and
- 3 – criticising and controlling the Government.

It comprises Her Majesty the Queen, a House of Assembly and a Senate. Her Majesty the Queen's representative in Saint Lucia is the **Governor General** who is the Head of State while the Prime Minister is the **Head of Government**. At the opening of a new session of Parliament, the Governor General delivers what is called the "**Throne Speech**". As part of his/her functional duties they are required to give assent to all Bills passed by Parliament.

The **House of Assembly** is the elected House of Parliament consisting of one representative of each of the island's seventeen constituencies.

The **Senate** is the Appointed House of Parliament consisting of eleven persons appointed on advice from the Prime Minister (6), the Leader of the Opposition (3)

and the Governor-General (2) acting in their own deliberate judgement after they have consulted certain bodies.

In order to view the Sittings of these Houses, Members of the public will first need to obtain a **Gallery Pass** from the Parliament Office. There is no charge. However, the rules governing one's conduct while at those Sittings are to be adhered to.

The **Speaker** is the presiding officer of the House of Assembly – who may be chosen from outside the House, or from among the elected Members. He has several other functions besides presiding at Sittings of the House. He sits as Chairman of Committees of the Whole House and certain other Standing Parliamentary committees. He is also responsible for the operations of the Parliament Office. If he is not an elected Member of the House, he has no vote in any matter being determined by the House.

**Standing Orders** refers to the document, which contains the rules, which govern the conduct of business in a Parliament.

A Member of Parliament is described as an **Independent** if he/she has no allegiance to any political party.

**Minister** is a Member of Parliament who is of Cabinet rank.

**Parliamentary Secretary** is a Member of Parliament without ministerial rank, but who has been given certain responsibilities within a Ministry, and carries out specific duties on behalf of the Minister.

**Stranger** refers to any person within the precincts of the House, who is neither an officer nor Member of Parliament. This term is used to determine the difference between a Member of Parliament and a visitor.

**Quorum** is the minimum number of persons with which the House may sit or a committee be convened.

The Parliament of Saint Lucia is a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), an association of Commonwealth Parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, are united by community of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.

The Association is a charity registered under the laws of the United Kingdom. Its stated purpose is to promote knowledge and understanding of the constitutional, legislative, economic, social and cultural systems within a parliamentary democratic framework. It undertakes this mission with particular reference to the countries of the Commonwealth of Nations and to countries having close historical and parliamentary associations with it.

It provides the sole means of regular consultation among Members of Commonwealth Parliaments. It fosters co-operation and understanding among them and promotes the study of and respect for Parliament. Its role is endorsed by Commonwealth Parliaments and Heads of Government. The CPA was founded in 1911, with branches in 142 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments, with a total membership of over 14,000 Parliamentarians. Further information on the CPA can be found at [www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org).