



National Assembly of Belize

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PRESS RELEASE

Staff Members of the National Assembly attended the Caribbean Clerk's Program 2025 in Trinidad and Tobago

--Monday, 17th February 2025 - *Parliamentary* officers attended the Caribbean Clerk's Program 2025, which was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Manuel Grant and Ms. Heillie Burns represented the National Assembly of Belize at this 3-day event, where they engaged with their Caribbean counterparts to strengthen Parliamentary democracy across the region. Their efforts focused on building stronger networks of Parliamentary clerks and officials, while also sharing knowledge to enhance efficiency and inclusivity within Parliaments.

Ms. Burns led a session on **The Independence of Parliament**. She emphasized the critical importance of maintaining Parliamentary autonomy as a cornerstone of democratic governance. Her presentation explored how the separation of powers between the Executive and the Legislature ensures accountability, prevents overreach, and promotes effective governance. She also discussed practical strategies for safeguarding Parliamentary independence, highlighting the key role Clerks play in supporting these vital functions.

Mr. Grant participated in several small workshops. He was selected as the rapporteur and presented on various topics, including the drafting of a *Code of Conduct* for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff, as well as the creation of a *Handbook* and *Induction Process* for newly elected Members of Parliament.

This year's Caribbean Clerk's Program brought together thirty-three delegates from seventeen Caribbean legislatures. Over three days, participants shared best practices, discussed challenges, and explored solutions to strengthen legislative procedures and practices. The program aimed to enhance collaboration between Caribbean and UK Parliamentary officials, with an emphasis on building lasting professional relationships.

The travel costs for Ms. Burns and Mr. Grant were covered by the CPA UK Branch. The two staff members returned to Belize on Saturday, February 15th, 2025.

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