

**Moulding Pandemic Parliaments: The role played by Commonwealth Caribbean  
Parliaments in the coronavirus crisis**

**By**

**Maukesh Basdeo**

**The University of the West Indies**

**St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago**

*Paper to be presented at the Fifteenth Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and  
Parliamentarians, Wroxton College, 30th & 31st July 2022*

*Email: maukesh.basdeo@sta.uwi.edu*

**ABSTARCT**

Assemblies are multifaceted institutions that perform multiple roles. Whereas their general roles differ across political systems, their functions generally includes representation, law making, scrutiny of government and others. These roles unsurprisingly intersect with the functions of Parliamentarians who has to set the scales to balance their party, constituency, and personal factors in their decision making. These days, in a time of unexpected disruption in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Commonwealth Caribbean Parliaments are required to reconsider its complex role under pressing and unanticipated new conditions.

Given its inherently inconsistent nature, Commonwealth Caribbean Parliaments has writhed at times to adjust, every so often with open partisan disagreements. In this analysis, the author explore how parliaments in the Commonwealth Caribbean responded to the COVID-19 crisis that has dominated everyone's lives in a way that has not happened in modern times. The author suggests that there are two critical fundamentals at play: the first, is how Commonwealth Caribbean parliaments have adjusted their ways of behaving to reflect the duty parliamentarians share with citizens i.e. to curb the spread of the disease and secondly how the functions of legislation, oversight and representation have changed and become more challenging because of the pandemic. It would have been a remiss on the part of the author

not recognising how Commonwealth Caribbean parliaments were changing so fundamentally. The fact that there are now thirteen legislatures in the Commonwealth Caribbean means that each institution can learn from the others. This article is an opportunity to compare and contrast practices that Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados adopted and how it has challenged parliaments, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff across the region.

There are two limitations with the article to declare. The research goes up to 30 September, 2021. The fact that the crisis continues means that this article will certainly not be the last to be written. The author is also mindful that every aspect of public and private life has had to adjust to COVID-19 and that parliaments are not special in having stories told, however parliaments are central to our system of government in the Commonwealth Caribbean, hence their COVID-19 stories are important.