



Commonwealth Address

Dear educators,

Peter: Every year, Natasha and I get together to brainstorm new things to challenge delegates at our annual Student Heads of Government Meeting. We aim to do this without detracting from the core objectives, the *raison d'être*, of the Student Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Natasha: We feel that students should be encouraged to research the relevant facts in a topic, form their own ideas and theories about how and why things are the way they are, and perhaps most importantly, ask the question, 'What can we do from where we are?'. To accomplish this, we leave the Student CHOGM open-ended, so that delegates don't feel the pressure to discuss the topic in a certain way or from a certain perspective.

Peter: Traditionally, delegates to Commonwealth operate in pairs: a head of government to represent the nation at the debating table, and a foreign minister operating in the back engaged in open, un-moderated discussion with other foreign ministers in other delegations. During the session, delegates will debate and negotiate with their counterparts—the key to the Commonwealth is that all resolutions must be passed by consensus. This can often be impossible to achieve, given the disparate opinions of all the nations in the Commonwealth.

Natasha: To simulate the real Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, (this year held in Brisbane, Australia, Oct. 28-30th, 2011) we try to build an encompassing conference, including all aspects of diplomacy on the world stage. Delegates will not only call upon their debate experience as the Head of Government, but their negotiating skills as the foreign minister, as well as responding and reacting to statements made by their fellows around the table. Of course, we have an exciting twist for this year's conference.

Peter: We will add a new dimension this year, in the form of a third person to a delegate team. The third role will focus more on the writing aspect, as delegates will be challenged to write news articles and editorials about each session or resolution, in a variety of tones, from being critical of their own head of government and their policies, to being the editorial mouthpiece of the government. They will be required to interview other delegates, consider the viewpoints of others, and their articles will be posted for the rest of the conference, to see a broad spectrum of voices being presented in the media.

Natasha: Every year, we are in awe of the way that our delegates claim the conference and place an indelible stamp on the sessions. We find that delegates thrive on the additional challenges and the unique format that Commonwealth is presented in. Given that Commonwealth is only one of three conference in Canada, we strongly urge that you do not miss this opportunity to participate in what is a truly unique and special event.

We hope to see you and your students there, come November 18, 2011!



Natasha Chiang



Peter Pham