

Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie



Section canadienne de
l'Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie

Report of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie and Working Meetings

Paris, France

March 14 to 18, 2022

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that attended the 40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie in Paris, France, from 14 to 18 March 2022 is honoured to present its report. The Branch also participated in several working and courtesy meetings in preparation for the Canadian presidency of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) in July 2022. The delegation was composed of **Francis Drouin**, MP, Chair of the Canadian Branch and 1st Vice-President of the APF, and Jean-François Lafleur, Association Secretary.

Parliamentarians from the four regions of the francophone world took part in this meeting. Mr. Drouin attended the conference as the 1st Vice-President of the APF, substituting for APF President Amadou Soumahoro. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following countries were represented at this meeting: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, France, Hungary, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo and Vietnam.

40th MCF

Francis Drouin represented the APF at the 40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie on behalf of its absent president, Amadou Soumahoro. Mr. Drouin participated in the debate on disinformation, presented APF initiatives to fight this serious problem and informed the ministers of the Francophonie of the organization's initiatives. He took part in debates on the democratic and security deficit in francophone countries. He also participated, in camera, in the discussions leading to an OIF resolution on the situation in Ukraine.

COURTESY VISITS

Meeting with the Secretary General of the Francophonie

Francis Drouin met with the Secretary General of La Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo, to introduce himself and discuss some important issues.

Mr. Drouin discussed the issue of youth with the Secretary General. Ms. Mushikiwabo spoke about how young people do not identify with their political representatives. She also noted the importance of exploring new structures to promote youth integration and representation. Mr. Drouin spoke about the importance of youth entrepreneurship and expressed his desire to support these youth initiatives.

Mr. Drouin and the Secretary General were keen to discuss the issue of women in politics. They expressed the wish to continue the work of promoting women in politics and to break down prejudices against women who put their names forward. On the same issue, Mr. Drouin highlighted the work of the Chair of the Network of Women Parliamentarians, Maryse Gaudreault, and the support given to the Network by the Rapporteur of the Canadian Branch, Marie-France Lalonde specifically for the development of a harassment policy. The issue of APF's work on civil status was also highlighted by the Secretary General.

The situation in Ukraine was also discussed. This situation brings with it a lot of political instability, especially within certain countries of the Francophonie, and they both fervently hoped that this issue does not divide the francophone world. It was noted that countries such as Moldova are being overwhelmed by the influx of refugees and are struggling to fulfill their humanitarian mandate.

On the subject of the Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie, Ms. Mushikiwabo and Mr. Drouin discussed the democratic deficit and disinformation in the Francophonie. They wish to work on repairing the relationships between governments and their people. In particular, they found that disinformation accentuates the mismatch in age group representativeness in politics. Mr. Drouin noted the difficult balancing act between fighting disinformation and individual rights, as well as the issue of the G5 Sahel.

Ms. Mushikiwabo and Mr. Drouin also discussed the importance of having their organizations align priorities in terms of working independently and coordinating together to ensure a common direction toward the objectives of La Francophonie.

COURTESY MEETINGS

Jean-Charles Luperto, APF Europe's *Chargé de mission*

Mr. Drouin and Mr. Luperto were joined by Damien Cesselin, Administrative Secretary General of the APF, and Xavier Baeselen, Assistant Administrative Secretary of the APF. The parliamentarians discussed the functioning of the APF and upcoming work. Mr. Drouin congratulated Mr. Luperto for his work and praised his involvement with the APF. The group discussed the more political role that the APF must play. Mr. Drouin stressed the need to promote and defend the French language more than ever in international institutions.

Mr. Drouin also raised the issue of branch representation in the various APF activities and noted that he would like to see more regional representation. Also addressed was the difficulties in organizing the various in-person APF deliberative meetings during pandemic times. Mr. Drouin explained the difficulties encountered in organizing the 47th Annual Session of the APF in Montreal and the significant financial risk involved. Ukraine was also discussed.

Meeting with Bruno Fuchs, Vice-President European Region

Francis Drouin met with Bruno Fuchs, Chair of the APF's French Branch. They discussed the role that APF parliamentarians can play in organizing francophone immigration at a time when there are labour shortages. The two parliamentarians discussed how to review the way immigrants are looked after and settled. They agreed that immigrants need to be welcomed, given job training opportunities, provided language training and supported. The massive immigration caused by the war in Ukraine is a tragedy and the newcomers must be supported.

They also discussed their respective visions of how APF operates. According to Mr. Fuchs, the APF needs to "work as a parliament". They also agreed that the APF must be more political and more active, supporting French-speaking countries in political difficulty

since they are vulnerable. The APF must support French-speaking countries and give them the benefits of being French-speaking, solidarity among French-speaking people being one of them. Mr. Drouin focused on what the APF must do to counter disinformation. There need to be tools to counter it, meetings between experts on the issue and a wider range of solutions.

Meeting with Jacques Krabal, Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF

During this short meeting, Francis Drouin met with the Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF, Jacques Krabal, MP (France), on the issues of youth, the Francophonie and the situation in Ukraine. The Parliamentary Secretary General spoke about the success of the new APF Young Francophone Ambassadors Program. Mr. Drouin was also able to meet with the APF International Secretariat team where he was introduced to each staff member. He told them that he hoped to see the organization continue its excellent work.

Meeting with Isabelle Hudon, Sherpa for La Francophonie for the Prime Minister of Canada

During this meeting, the plan for Canada's presidency of the APF, starting in July 2022, was presented to the advisers of the Canadian Embassy in Paris and to Isabelle Hudon, Sherpa of La Francophonie for the Prime Minister of Canada. Francis Drouin presented the Canadian Branch's desire to promote and defend the French language in this era of globalization. Mr. Drouin also spoke to Ms. Hudon about the workings of the APF and the partnerships that the APF has with certain governmental development agencies. They also discussed the 40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie and the topics that were addressed there, such as disinformation, the democratic and security deficit in francophone countries and the situation in Ukraine.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, MP
President of the Canadian Branch of
the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
ACTIVITY	40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie and Working Meetings
DESTINATION	Paris, France
DATES	14 to 18 March 2022

DELEGATION

SENATE

HOUSE OF
COMMONS

Francis Drouin

STAFF

Jean-François Lafleur, Executive Secretary

TRANSPORTATION \$ 2,160.51

ACCOMMODATION \$ 1,471.63

HOSPITALITY \$ 0.00

PER DIEMS \$ 1,059.25

OFFICIAL GIFTS \$ 257.57

MISCELLANEOUS \$ 35.03

TOTAL \$ **5,320.54**