

Canada - France
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary
Delegation respecting its participation at
the 39th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary
Association**

**Bordeaux and Paris, France
7 to 11 April, 2013**

Report

Introduction

From April 7th to 11th, 2013, nine Canadian parliamentarians were in France for the 39th Annual Meeting of the Canada–France Interparliamentary Association (CFIA). Senator Claudette Tardif presided the Canadian delegation, comprised of Senators Claude Carignan, Serge Joyal, Jean-Claude Rivest, and MPs Lois Brown, Denis Coderre, Yvon Godin, Hoang Mai and John Williamson. Also accompanying the delegation were executive secretary Alexandre Roger and analyst Lucie Lecomte.

The French delegation was presided by National Assembly member Catherine Coutelle, and included Senators Claudine Lepage, Karine Claireaux, Louis Duvernois, Catherine Morin-Desailly, Charles Revet, André Gattolin, and National Assembly members Marie-Noëlle Battistel, Laurence Dumont, Marc Le Fur, Joëlle Huillier, Pascale Got, Patrice Martin-Lalande, Bernard Perrut, Sandrine Hurel and Michèle Bonneton. The French delegation was assisted by Alexandre Michel and Delphine Bert, executive secretaries of the France–Canada Interparliamentary Association (FCIA) for the National Assembly and for the Senate, respectively.

This report is in two parts. The first part reports on the delegation’s meetings and site visits in Bordeaux and the Médoc region relevant to the following themes: sustainable development and the agri-food sector. The second part covers the themed and other meetings that took place in Paris. Themed meetings are central to the Association’s work. They allow parliamentarians to address topics of common interest with a variety of perspectives and political dynamics specific to Canada and France. The outcomes of the dialogue can then be relayed by the parliamentarians to their respective parliaments and governments.

Bordeaux and the Médoc region, April 7th – 9th, 2013

1. Information Session

The Canadian delegation arrived in Bordeaux on April 7th, 2013. The Canadian parliamentarians attended an information session organized by Marc Berthiaume, Parliamentary and Political Attaché at the Canadian Embassy in France.

On behalf of the Canadian Ambassador to France, Mr. Berthiaume extended a warm welcome to the Canadian parliamentarians. He informed the delegates that they were invited to dinner at the Ambassador’s residence to discuss Canada–France relations further to Prime Minister Ayrault’s visit to Canada in March of this year.

Mr. Berthiaume noted that the delegation’s visit came at a sensitive time for President Hollande and France’s entire political class. François Hollande’s government is unpopular as a result of the “Cahuzac scandal.” Polls show that 70% of respondents are dissatisfied with the current government.

In response to opposition attacks, the President and the government pledged to roll out much tougher asset disclosure rules for elected officials, together with more substantial oversight. For its part, the opposition criticized the government for not doing enough prior to the scandal, if not directly or indirectly engaging in a cover-up. The media is wondering about the possibility of President Hollande shuffling his cabinet or holding a referendum on the announced measures in an attempt to regain control of the situation. However, every indication is that the President's office will avoid a shuffle, which would imply an admission of collective, rather than individual responsibility for the scandal. A referendum could also be problematic in that it would give the public an opportunity to express their lack of confidence in a government that they believe has not been able to deal with France's economic and social crisis.

That said, French intervention in Mali has helped bolster public support for François Hollande's government, which showed strength and leadership.

The political crisis is aggravated by the economic crisis. Economic growth is at 0%, unemployment is up, and the gross debt represents 90% of GDP. The fact that all of Europe is in crisis is making it difficult for France to recover.

2. Guided Tour of Downtown Bordeaux and Welcoming Reception

Following the information session, the delegates went on a guided tour of downtown Bordeaux, which showcased the city's history and architecture. Afterward, the delegates were hosted at a welcoming reception attended by Ms. Catherine Coutelle, Ms. Joëlle Huillier, Ms. Pascale Got and Senator Louis Duvernois.

3. Visits to Sites in the Médoc

On April 8th, 2013, the Canadian delegation visited sites in the Médoc region relevant to the themes of sustainable development and the agri-food sector.

a. Visit to the Hourtin Dunes and Wetlands Nature Reserve

The delegation first travelled to Hourtin, where it was warmly welcomed to the town hall by Christophe Birot, Mayor of Hourtin and Gironde General Councillor; François Bonnet, Executive Director of the National Forests Office (Office national des forêts (ONF)); and Henri Sabarot, President of the National Hunting and Wildlife Agency.

The delegation then visited the Hourtin Dunes and Wetlands Nature Reserve and heard a presentation on sustainable development issues as they relate to preserving ecosystems and to the water cycle in forested coastal areas. The Hourtin Dunes and Wetlands Nature Reserve, an ONF-managed national reserve and forest, is the largest nature reserve in Aquitaine (2,151 ha).

Aquitaine has one of the few coastlines in France that have not been urbanized. The government acted to preserve the coast by buying up land. Now, 80% of the coastline is government land.

In France, forests are managed in a multifunctional way, so that areas are not subject to single use. The ONF manages the forests, extracts resources and preserves their natural heritage. Multifunctional management includes a social component: forest management and conservation is carried out while welcoming visitors.

As regards water management, a local water commission implements water development and management master plans, which were recently renewed. Water charges are set by water agencies. The area soil is flat and sandy, meaning that in summer, water evaporates at a rate of 9–10 mm per day. In an effort to limit water use, farmers have water meters and must submit an annual statement to the water agency. The charge is five cents per m³, and drilling is strictly prohibited.

Regarding agricultural inputs, the sandy soil readily filters out fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, etc., resulting in a flushing effect. This is why it was important to develop good practices and use inputs effectively and efficiently. The leaching of fertilizers is partly responsible for the appearance of nuisance aquatic plants in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the problem is not much of a concern for biodiversity at this time, the ONF is monitoring the impact of these plants on natural habitats.

Following the presentations on reserve management, water management and agricultural inputs, the delegation walked along a trail to visit the reserve's dunes, a unique example of biodiversity. The dunes were formed by sand blown by the wind in recent geological time (less than 5,000 years ago).

From the coast (to the west) to the forested dunes (to the east), the open habitats of the white and grey (non-forested) dunes give way to the forests. The dunes' specific ecological conditions allowed the growth of unique plant life of great heritage value. These habitats are exposed to wind and salt spray, sand burial, low nutrient availability, a lack of water, and surface temperature extremes. Today the forest along the coastal dunes produces lumber and helps keep the sand in place. The ONF closely monitors the erosion problems affecting the dunes. It is estimated that six metres of beach is lost per year due to marine erosion.

Following the visit to the white, grey and forested dunes of the Hourtin Dunes and Wetlands Nature Reserve, the Canadian delegation, accompanied by National Assembly Members Pascale Got and Joëlle Huillier, continued its tour of the Médoc region. Measuring 115 km by 75 km, it is one of the biggest constituencies in France. Also referred to as the peninsula, the map of Médoc is colour-coded to indicate its main industries: blue for the sea; red for the vineyards, and green for the pine forest. Since the forest was devastated by a hurricane in 2000, efforts are being made to manage the forest more effectively. Reforestation is underway, and local governments are exploring the possibility of planting hardwoods in order to diversify the forest, since maritime pines are fragile and highly flammable.

There are over 1,200 properties or châteaux in the Médoc region that produce wine on site. There are several levels of producers. Foreign investors are keenly interested in châteaux property, but vineyard planting and operations are regulated and protected. Several châteaux do not pay property taxes, despite the fact their land is not zoned for purely agricultural

purposes. Following a property census, there has been some pressure to have the land rezoned and for property taxes to be collected so as to provide an income for the surrounding municipalities and regions.

Given the economic crisis, a growing number of young people appear to be returning to the land to make a living. Farming provides job opportunities. As well, there are a number of development projects, such as the creation of a national park in the Médoc, the use of wetlands for farming, and the establishment of aquaculture operations, such as a return to oyster farming. That said, the Médoc suffers from high unemployment, particularly for women. As well, young people are leaving school early to work in the vineyards, which in many cases limit their career opportunities.

b. Visit to the “Eau-Médoc” Salt Marsh Aquaculture Farm

In St-Vivien-de-Médoc, the delegation was warmly welcomed by Bertrand lung, who operates the “Eau-Médoc” salt marsh aquaculture farm, established 25 years ago on 40 acres of wetlands in a grains crop area. Mr. lung developed the area by digging in 98% clay soil to create pools for capturing saltwater.

Mr. lung said that wetlands are the planet’s best carbon wells given the aquatic plants that store carbon. The farm’s pools are also highly biodiverse as the water comes from the estuary. The estuary water coming out of the pools is cleaner than when it went in thanks to the plants and other organisms in the pools that filter the water.

This 17-ha salt marsh operation is ideal for farming Mediterranean prawns, crustaceans, clams and oyster spats. Mr. lung is currently able to produce 200 kg of Mediterranean prawns per hectare. While this is a relatively low-density yield (one 20 g prawn / m²), this is intentional. This low-volume production means that he can oversee all the steps in the value chain, from breeding to distribution.

Mr. lung would like to eventually farm oysters. Until the 1970s, almost all oysters consumed in France came from the Gironde estuary. This traditional oyster-producing area was deeply affected by the discovery in the 1970s of pollutants in the estuary: copper, zinc and high levels of cadmium. This contamination came from old mines and former industrial sites 250 km upstream. Factories and metal extraction left residue with high metal concentrations that contaminated the rivers and water system flowing into the Lot, which in turn flows into the Garonne, which after Bordeaux joins the Gironde estuary. These minerals, particularly cadmium, affect oyster production in the Gironde estuary. Cadmium and sodium actually combine to form a soluble compound that oysters store permanently in their tissues. France therefore adopted regulations to oversee shellfish production and consumption. Currently, France is focusing heavily on developing hatcheries for its supply of oysters.

c. Lunch and Tour of Château Phélan Ségur

Following the visit to the aquaculture operation, the delegation visited the Château Phélan Ségur to see how sustainable development principles are applied at a vineyard. Château

Phélan Ségur is an 89-ha estate winery in Saint-Estèphe. The Gardinier Family, with the help of a vibrant team led by the Château's general manager, Véronique Dausse, looks after this well-known wine.

The lands of Phélan Ségur are on Quaternary gravel made up of boulder cobble and gravel coated in clay sand. Crop monitoring is mainly focused on preserving the soil structure to ensure good surface permeability. The vines are densely planted with 9,000 plants/ha to produce 40 hl/ha. The vineyard, which uses green pest-control principles, covers close to 70 ha.

Wine growers who follow green pest-control principles use chemicals less often and use treatments that are not as aggressive as those used by traditional wine growers. When conscientiously applied, these pest-control measures may be quite similar to organic agricultural practices.

d. Visit to Ferme Fourcade, an Organic Cattle Farm

After visiting Château Phélan Ségur, the delegation went to Ferme Fourcade, an organic cattle farm run by Jean-Denis Dubois. Founded in 1997 in the wake of the first mad cow crisis, Ferme Fourcade is a good example of a farm that uses organic livestock production techniques. The farm currently has 350 to 370 head of Limousin cattle.

The farm was awarded a “territoire bio engagé” organic certification by Arbio Aquitaine, the regional interdisciplinary organic association. As France's first regional organic certification program, it aims to encourage, compensate and promote communities in Aquitaine that have successfully implemented the Grenelle Environment Forum recommendations in terms of organically farmed land area (at least 6%) and local restaurants being supplied with organic produce (at least 20% organic produce on menus).

4. Information Session at Bordeaux City Hall

The morning of April 9th, 2013, the delegation met with Mr. Alain Juppé, the Mayor of Bordeaux and former French Prime Minister. Mr. Juppé warmly welcomed the Canadian delegates, highlighting the importance of the friendship between Canada and France. He then mentioned a number of municipal initiatives Bordeaux has taken in recent years and expressed his hope that this visit will serve as a model for urban planning and sustainable development. Ms. Coutelle then thanked Mr. Juppé. She summed up the mission, spoke to the vitality of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association and the fact that, under the leadership of Senator Claudette Tardif, President of the Canadian delegation, discussions have allowed the French parliamentarians to learn about Canada's broader francophone community. Senator Tardif then thanked Mr. Juppé for his warm welcome and congratulated him on the development of Bordeaux, a vibrant, modern city that manages to retain all of its old-world charm and celebrate its unique heritage.

The information session organized by Bordeaux officials featured the City's latest urban planning and sustainable development initiatives. Bordeaux's first urban initiative, designed in

1996, introduced streetcars, the waterfront as a new area for development, and the city's heritage as a unifying characteristic. The second urban initiative, announced in 2009, laid the foundation for a sustainable urban centre able to accommodate 100,000 new residents by 2030. Since 2009, the projects have been rolled out quickly, resulting in the third urban initiative – “2030 : vers le Grand Bordeaux, du croissant de lune à la pleine lune” – aimed at achieving Bordeaux's full potential. This new urban initiative features three major components: engaging and coordinating the community in the governance framework promoted by the City; promoting development during a period of crisis; and developing planned projects.

One issue concerned removing cars from the downtown area and promoting soft mobility. A new drawbridge spanning the Garonne will be opened in March 2013. With respect to heritage, Bordeaux's designation as a UNESCO world heritage site has boosted the local tourism industry. In the coming years, Bordeaux is looking to develop its right bank in order to address the imbalance between the two banks. The Garonne must be seen as a catalyst, not as a barrier.

Like all cities, Bordeaux faces a number of challenges. Keeping cars out of the downtown area poses a problem for suburban residents who work downtown or need to travel to access public services. As well, finding affordable housing in Bordeaux is difficult for those on a modest or low income. In 2013, Bordeaux was France's fourth most expensive city. The City has therefore taken action to build affordable housing for an additional 100,000 residents, such as by developing large empty spaces left over from decreased port activity.

5. Visit to a Green Housing Development in Bordeaux

In keeping with the theme of housing and sustainable development, the delegation visited the construction site of Bordeaux's new green housing development, Ginko. The project, awarded to Bouygues Immobilier in 2006, is the start of the regional and local governments' major sustainable development initiative “Bordeaux 2030, vers une métropole durable.”

In terms of energy conservation, Ginko project officials state that 90% of the housing units are certified “BBC-Effinergie” (low-energy consumption building) (45 kWh/m² of net surface area / year of primary energy). Solar panels supplement the heating system and partially preheat home hot water. Solar photovoltaic panels generate electricity, thereby reducing the neighbourhood's power demand. Since the summer of 2012, the green neighbourhood has been heated entirely by a wood-fired central heating plant operated by Cofely (80% wood biomass and 20% plant biomass) using resources provided by local industry. Rainwater from public areas and homes is captured and used for watering gardens. Hardy plants in green spaces were chosen for their low water requirements.

The green neighbourhood is also designed as a vibrant community. It already has a new school area with a day care, a pre-school and kindergarten, a primary school and a community centre. It also has a multi-purpose arts and cultural space as well as various business and services. The first residents arrived in September 2012.

6. Information Session with Vermilion

In order to further expand its knowledge about sustainable development, the Canadian delegation attended a presentation by Jean-Pascal Simard, Director of Public Relations for Vermilion, a Canadian-based international oil company. With operations in Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and Australia, Vermilion is France's largest oil producer. Its wells in the Aquitaine and Paris basins produce 9,000 barrels per day, which represents close to 50% of domestic production. However, only 1% of France's oil consumption is produced domestically.

As part of its sustainable development practices, Vermilion captures emissions from its drilling and extraction operations to supply a greenhouse that produces tomatoes and provide energy for a green neighbourhood's heating plant.

Paris, April 10th – 11th, 2013

1. Visit to the National Assembly Library

The first working day in the capital began with a visit to the National Assembly Library. In the Library's vault, curators showed the delegates rare treasures of Canadian and French history, such as an illuminated bible, a richly illustrated treatise on Aboriginal peoples in the Americas, maps of New France, original manuscripts of *La Marseillaise* and the Tennis Court Oath, and certain manuscripts of works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

2. First Working Session on Sustainable Development

Following their visit to the Library, the Canadian and French parliamentarians met for their first working session on sustainable development.

a. Water Management

Marie-Noël Battistel, National Assembly member for Isère, asked for the discussion on water management to focus on hydroelectric dams, a current issue in France. She explained that the French national power company EDF is a longstanding company and major energy producer for both France and Europe. However, in April 2010, in order to comply with the wishes of the European Union, the French government opened up government-owned, EDF-managed facilities to competition. This opening up to foreign competition is a contentious issue. Ms. Battistel then began the discussion by asking the Canadian parliamentarians to explain how small hydroelectric facilities in Canada are managed.

Senator Claude Carignan explained that dam management and energy generation is under provincial jurisdiction. In Quebec, private companies may build and operate small hydroelectric facilities, but they must first seek approval from Hydro-Québec. The Senator added that there are other sources of electricity, such as wind power and biodegradable waste conversion plants. Heavy electricity consumers such as factories and industries often generate their own power and may obtain authorization to sell their surplus electricity to the

grid. The Senator also pointed out that Quebec's hydro grid is managed using state-of-the-art technology and that 90%–95% of Quebec's electricity is generated by hydroelectric dams, although the trend is toward alternative sources. He closed by saying that in terms of the environment, the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments apply a system of mitigation measures.

MP Hoang Mai contributed to the discussion on provincial jurisdiction by stating that if dams are on waterways that cross provincial boundaries, the federal government may be able to act.

MP Yvon Godin explained that the provinces are keenly interested in managing their own electricity production. He gave the example of Shawn Graham's government in New Brunswick, which wanted to sell NB Power to Hydro-Québec. Under the agreement negotiated by the governments of New Brunswick and Quebec in 2009 and 2010, Hydro-Québec would have obtained a monopoly over electricity transmission and distribution in New Brunswick, except in three municipal grids – Edmundston, Saint John and Perth-Andover. New Brunswickers opposed the project, and the \$3.2-billion agreement-in-principle was eventually abandoned in March 2010, costing Shawn Graham the 2010 elections in the process.

Senator Claudette Tardif said that the main energy sources varied from province to province. The Western provinces depend mainly on oil and natural gas.

While the provinces have their own government-owned corporations, that does not prevent national or international competition. One example given was the federal government's financial contribution to Newfoundland's Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project, a \$6.3-billion loan guarantee over 35 to 40 years. The project essentially involves transmitting electricity generated in Labrador to the electricity grid toward the United States via Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Quebec sees this decision as federal interference in provincial jurisdiction and condemned the resulting competition – using taxes paid by Canadians, and therefore Quebecers – against Quebec's hydroelectricity. Quebec states that the electricity generated at Muskrat Falls could use Quebec's electrical transmission system at a smaller cost. The Quebec government expressed keen interest in working with Newfoundland to transmit its electricity, but it is critical of the fact that money paid by Quebec taxpayers would be used to fund a project that would compete against their electricity. Mr. Godin said that New Brunswick supports the project.

The delegates noted that France and Canada have similar challenges with respect to electricity generation. The construction of new dams, pumped energy transfer stations and wind power generation are controversial in both countries. Environmental assessments stand in the way of projects that would have gone ahead in the past. As well, Canada's Aboriginal peoples have a say over projects involving waterways and are actively involved in developing environmental standards aimed at protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.

Senator Serge Joyal summed up what his colleagues had said by saying that in Canada it was important to develop a coherent policy for the interprovincial transmission of electricity. As for small dams, Canada, like France, is trying to strike a balance between hydroelectric infrastructure development and environmental considerations, such as by implementing mitigation measures.

On the topic of sound water management, the predominant problem is wastage. Changing consumer habits and establishing good water conservation practices depend largely on the cost of consumption and on education. Senator Claude Carignan said that in Canada, ample water supplies leave the false impression that it is an inexhaustible natural resource. In fact, few Quebec households have water meters. Those without a meter pay a flat charge set by municipalities.

In France, however, the use of water meters is widespread. Meters are even installed in individual social housing units instead of just one meter for the entire building. Certain communities have them in apartments in order to educate residents about their water use. That said, regulating the irrigation of farmland is a contentious issue.

Both countries also have a problem regarding water pollution. Senator Carignan said that close to 40 million Canadians (one in three Canadians and one in ten Americans) live within the Great Lakes basin. Increasing demands are being placed on the lakes by industry, farms and coastal cities. Some of the Great Lakes are seeing their lowest water levels ever. As well, raw sewage is still being dumped into lakes and rivers. About 20 Canadian and American coastal cities dump about 90 billion litres of untreated sewage into the Great Lakes each year.

b. Use of Agricultural Inputs

Ms. Joëlle Huillier opened the discussion on the use of agricultural inputs. She began by making a distinction between organic agriculture, which limits the use of inputs as much as possible, and sustainable agriculture, which carefully uses inputs, the use of which is regulated.

The use of agricultural inputs has long been a part of high-yield farming. Without question, the use of these products involves substantial food safety risks and may have a significant impact on plant, animal and human health. In France, an interdepartmental plan to reduce pesticide risks was established in June 2006, and the Environment Round Table (le Grenelle de l'environnement) confirmed the approach followed in the plan, assuming a number of commitments. These include cutting the use of synthetic pesticides in half, if possible over 10 years, and the transition toward 20% organic farming by 2020. These standards are consistent with those of the European Union.

Senator Jean-Claude Rivest spoke on behalf of the Canadian delegation. In general, Canada practises sustainable farming and has comprehensive legislation to promote the effective and efficient use of agricultural inputs. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency applies these regulations to protect the food supply and animal and plant health, and to improve the well-

being of Canadians, the environment and the economy. Since agriculture is a shared jurisdiction, the provinces and territories have also developed legislation, policies and programs designed to reduce the use of agricultural inputs and promote farming methods that respect the environment and the principles of sustainable agriculture.

Canadian farmers face certain challenges with respect to international trade. The Canadian approval process can sometimes be rather lengthy, particularly for chemical fertilizers and veterinary drugs. This means that farmers can experience difficulties obtaining inputs already in use elsewhere. In fact, the slow pace of the Canadian approval process is one of the non-tariff barriers affecting the progress of talks on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union. European exporters have complained about the length of time it takes the Canadian process to approve new veterinary drugs, about the delays in processing applications for approving food additives and about Canadian cheese compositional standards. Senator Rivest finished by saying that it would be worthwhile to look at how the European Union, France and Canada could work together to streamline the process for approving agricultural inputs.

Senator Claude Carignan raised the issue of organic certification. Obviously animal husbandry is not possible without some use of veterinary drugs, and consideration must also be given to inputs found in animal feed. Is purely organic agriculture even possible? How does one determine what exactly is organic? In France, organic certification implies specific standards. The delegates agreed that it would be important to standardize the definition of organic, for instance to facilitate international trade in agricultural products.

The discussion on agricultural inputs ended on a comment about the delay between the withdrawal of banned products and the marketing of replacement products. While understandable, these delays cause problems for the development of the agricultural industry.

c. Ecosystem Protection and Conservation

MP Hoang Mai began his presentation by explaining that ecosystem protection is a jurisdiction shared by the federal and provincial/territorial governments. The federal government plays a leading role in protecting the oceans. Since Canada has one of the world's longest coastlines, it relies on extensive legislation and intergovernmental cooperation. Mr. Mai also discussed the important role played by Aboriginal peoples in ecosystem protection and conservation.

Mr. Mai also mentioned that Canadian MP Fin Donnelly introduced a bill to ban the import of shark fins. The MP ended by saying that in Canada, non-governmental organizations are at the forefront of protecting the oceans, shoreline, seabed and marine life. While there have been some efforts at education, there are no comprehensive, nationally coordinated initiatives.

As for France, Patrice Martin-Lalande discussed the protection and conservation program implemented in Sologne, a region with 500,000 ha of forest. The Sologne reserve is included

in the 1,753 French sites in the Natura 2000 Network of protected land and marine areas in Europe, designated as such due to their rare or fragile wildlife and plant species and their habitats. Natura 2000 balances nature preservation with socio-economic concerns. However, certain measures decided at the European level disrupt the natural cycle and benefit one species at the expense of another. The most striking example is that of the cormorants, which are protected in the Scandinavian countries but deplete fish stocks in France.

3. Attendance at Question Period in the National Assembly

After lunch, the Canadian delegation attended Question Period in the National Assembly. They were introduced and greeted by the Speaker and warmly welcomed by the members present.

4. Working Session on Agri-food Industries

a. Working Session Opened by Claude Bartolone, Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. Claude Bartolone, Speaker of the National Assembly, opened the working session on agri-food industries. In his opening remarks, Mr. Bartolone acknowledged the hard work and effectiveness of the Canada–France Interparliamentary Association (CFIA), which is a perfect example of the friendship between France and Canada. He then went on to thank Senator Tardif and Ms. Coutelle for their hard work and boundless energy. He was particularly pleased with the gender balance by having women presidents at the head of the Association's Canadian and French delegations.

The Speaker said that Canada is at the forefront of the international Francophonie and that all Canadian communities are working toward enhancing the vitality of the French fact in Canada. For our two countries, the French language is what conveys our values and serves as the foundation of our civilizations. As well, France and Canada are partners in peace and national security. Canada's presence and support during the crisis in Mali were invaluable to the French mission. The Speaker then spoke about the strength of Canada's financial system, which successfully weathered the global financial crisis. He also said that France was eagerly awaiting the signing of the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, which will promote economic exchanges.

In Mr. Bartolone's view, the comparative work of the CFIA is important for understanding the major issues and common challenges facing our two countries. The on-site visits are informative for our elected representatives, thereby allowing for more informed public debate. Mr. Bartolone concluded by stating that parliamentary diplomacy is important for strengthening the ties between both countries.

Senator Tardif thanked Mr. Bartolone for his warm welcome. She also noted the excellent diplomatic relations and the historic, cultural, linguistic and even family ties between France and Canada, and she acknowledged the importance of Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault's

visit to Canada in March. Senator Tardif then thanked Ms. Coutelle for her work and dedication as President of the France-Canada Interparliamentary Association.

b. Food Safety and Traceability

Senator Serge Joyal spoke on the theme of food safety and traceability. In Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency conducts all federal food inspection activities. It is also responsible for the administration and enforcement of the *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act*, which applies to select food products sold in Canada. The Agency has further responsibilities for animal health and plant protection. It is one of the few agencies in the world with responsibilities that cover the whole food continuum – both before and after agricultural production.

Enacted on November 22nd, 2012, the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* strengthened traceability requirements. Under the Act, the Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the traceability of any food commodity, including regulations requiring the establishment of systems to identify the food commodity, determine its places of departure and destination and its location as it moves between those places, or provide information to persons who could be affected by it. These new requirements elicited strong reactions.

Currently, safety and traceability regulations and standards vary from country to country. This situation is not without consequences, since it can sometimes give rise to international trade disputes. Legislators therefore face tremendous challenges. National standards must be implemented to ensure food safety. However, these standards must not become barriers to trade. To a certain degree, they must be brought in line with those established by our partners so as to foster development of our respective agri-food industries. It appears that traceability now occupies a central place in agri-food law in both the European Union and Canada and that it is the generally recognized means for meeting consumers' food security demands.

Then, Ms. Pascale Got spoke generally about the agri-food industry in France. She began by stating that the industry provides France with very substantial economic leverage, generating €8 billion (€11 billion if the impact from grain production, the wine industry and exports of luxury goods are included). In an effort to support the industry, ministers Garot and Le Folle organized and hosted conferences on the agri-food industry in various regions. Ms. Got also said that the government needs to invest more in innovation in order to improve profitability. As well, the French government must do more to support and organize exports. She raised the example of putting measures in place to streamline customs and administrative requirements that could impede trade.

Mr. Marc Le Fur stated that the agri-food industry is a major creator of jobs throughout France, particularly with respect to animal husbandry. There are several types of farm operations active in France: traditional, industrial and co-operative. The industry is both local and international with intense competition. That said, there are some questions about farm occupations. A number of occupations fall under the difficult or heavy category, which dissuades potential workers.

MP Denis Coderre said that the current trend is toward developing policies to ensure the safety of imported food. However, as a parliamentarian, it is important to ensure that these standards, although important, do not become stumbling blocks in negotiations toward a comprehensive trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. Near the end of the working meeting, halal meat in France and food wastage were briefly discussed.

5. Association Dinner Hosted by the Canadian Ambassador to France, Lawrence Cannon

The Canadian Ambassador to France, Lawrence Cannon, warmly welcomed the Canadian delegation. Following an interesting discussion on current issues affecting France and Canada, Mr. Cannon suggested a few themes that could be raised during future comparative studies by the CFIA. During his visit to Canada in 2013, Prime Minister Ayrault was made aware of the vitality of francophone minority communities, particularly the one in Toronto. The expansion of French language could be a topic for study. Ambassador Cannon then suggested exploring the issue of student and young worker mobility between France and Canada.

6. Visit to the Canadian Cultural Centre and Lunch in the Senate

On April 11th, 2013, the Canadian delegation visited the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris to see a personal exhibition by one of the greatest Inuit artists, Kenojuak Ashevak, who died in Cape Dorset, Nunavut, on January 8th, 2013.

The delegates then attended lunch in the Senate, hosted by Senator Claudine Lepage, Chair of the Senate Friendship Group, under the patronage of Senator Jean-Pierre Bel, Speaker of the Senate.

The French and Canadian delegates continued their work during the meeting to plan the Association's upcoming activities.

7. Planning Meeting for Upcoming Association Activities

a. Location and Date of Next Meeting

The delegates proposed September 1st to 6th, 2013, as the dates for the next meeting.

It was suggested that the French delegation arrive in Montréal and then travel to northern and southern New Brunswick and to Moncton.

b. Discussion on the Themes to Be Discussed

The delegates proposed continuing the study on sustainable development, focusing specifically on the fisheries and oceans, important issues for New Brunswick and France. Further to suggestions given by the Canadian Ambassador to France, the delegates agreed to discuss student mobility exchanges and agreements. Meetings could be arranged on this issue with academics from the University of Moncton.

The issue of nuclear energy was raised. While this is an important, rapidly developing issue, the CFIA has previously discussed this theme.

The culture, heritage and vitality of Acadian and francophone communities in the Maritimes could be incorporated into the agenda, especially in connection with cultural activities.

c. Discussion on Parliamentary Diplomacy

The delegates discussed the importance of using working meetings to come up with joint strategies on common issues in order to make progress.

It is worth noting that all proposals are to be submitted to the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association executive for approval.

8. Tour of the Luxembourg Palace with Damien Déchelette, the Palace's Chief Architect and Visit to the Senate Chamber

Following the organizational meeting, the delegation was given a tour of the Luxembourg Palace with Damien Déchelette, the Palace's chief architect. The delegates then went to the Senate to watch debate on the bill to open marriage to same-sex couples. The Canadian delegation was introduced and greeted by the Speaker and warmly applauded by the senators present in the Chamber.

9. Meeting with Guillaume Garot, Minister Delegate Responsible for Agri-food

The Canadian delegation then visited the Ministry of Agriculture to meet with Guillaume Garot, Minister Delegate responsible for agri-food. The discussion focused on the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, particularly the status of the negotiations, the stumbling blocks pertaining to agri-food trade, and the impact of such an agreement between the European Union and the United States.

The members of the Canadian delegation spoke at length about supply management, an issue Canada is concerned about and the impact of an agreement between the European Union and the United States on Canadian agri-food trade. They also asked the Minister to comment on the labelling of genetically modified organisms, traceability measures for agri-food products, France's investment in scientific research in agri-food, and short food distribution chains.

Minister Garot addressed each of these issues. He first discussed France's main difficulties regarding agri-food trade in connection with the European Union–Canada agreement. These

have to do with sensitive agricultural products such as beef and pork. As animal husbandry is a vitally important sector for France, the government wishes to protect it. Then there is geographic labelling, the rules of origin and applying these rules. At the conclusion of the meeting, Senator Jean-Claude Rivest thanked Minister Garot on behalf of the Canadian delegation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the 39th Annual Meeting was a resounding success in terms of the program and the warm welcome received by the Canadian parliamentarians. The delegates spoke about the seriousness of the delegation's work on sustainable development and the agri-food sector as demonstrated by visits of significant sites, and during more theoretical working sessions. The comparative studies based on themes gave the parliamentarians a deeper understanding of common issues and provided an opportunity to share best practices. The delegates also mentioned the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and the very welcoming and friendly rapport that has developed between the members.

Sincere thanks were also extended to the officials from the French and Canadian parliaments and to the staff of the Canadian Embassy, especially Marc Berthiaume, Parliamentary and Political Attaché, for the support they provided to the Association. The French and Canadian delegates will meet again in New Brunswick in the fall of 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Lois Brown, M.P.
Member of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	39 th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
DESTINATION	Bordeaux and Paris, France
DATES	April 7 to 11, 2013
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Claude Carignan, Senator Hon. Serge Joyal, Senator Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest, Senator Hon. Claudette Tardif, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Lois Brown, M.P. Mr. Denis Coderre, M.P. Mf. Yvon Godin, M.P. Mr. Hoang Mai, M.P. Mr. John Williamson, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Alexandre Roger, Association Secretary Ms. Lucie Lecomte, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$38,924.62
ACCOMMODATION	\$14,567.03
HOSPITALITY	\$0,00
PER DIEMS	\$4,574.99
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$634.76
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$23.85
TOTAL	\$58,725.25

