



Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on its participation at the 46th Ordinary Session of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*

Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*

Videoconference

From January 19 to 29, 2021

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF), which participated by videoconference in the 46th Session of the APF from January 19 to 29, 2021, has the honour to present its report.

Led by Francis Drouin, MP and President of the Canadian Branch of the APF, the delegation was composed of the following parliamentarians:

- The Honourable Jean Guy Dagenais, Senator;
- The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator;
- The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator;
- Steven Blaney, MP;
- Alexis Brunelle Duceppe, MP;
- Chris d'Entremont, MP;
- Joël Godin, MP;
- Marie France Lalonde, MP;
- Kristina Michaud, MP; and
- Darrell Samson, MP.

The delegation was assisted by Laurence Brosseau, Gabrielle de Billy Brown and Dominique Montpetit, advisers to the Canadian Branch, and Jean François Lafleur, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

More than 350 participants from 46 branches attended the 46th Session of the APF.

BUREAU

The Bureau of the APF met by videoconference on January 25, 2021. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Amadou Soumahoro, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and President of the APF. Three members of the Canadian Branch of the APF attended the meeting on Bureau business, Francis Drouin, First Vice-President of the APF, Joël Godin, Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF, and Chris d'Entremont, Vice-President of the Canadian Branch of the APF.

At the meeting, the Parliamentary Secretary-General presented his activity report for 2020 to the Bureau. Jacques Krabal, Parliamentary Secretary-General of the APF and Member (France), reviewed the activities undertaken by the APF in the last year. Joël Godin requested a project update on the francophone parliamentary expertise portal (Parlex),

as well as details on the APF's financial support to the Stop aux Infox [stop fake news] initiative, launched by the Union francophone.

The Bureau also discussed its cooperation programming for 2021. Owing to a possible reduction in funding from the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) for the APF's cooperation programs, two programming options were presented: a full lineup and a reduced lineup. Chris d'Entremont requested clarification on how the reduced lineup was developed and which criteria were used to reduce the funding of certain program activities. He also requested clarification on how many cooperation program requests the APF received annually.

NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Marie France Lalonde, MP, attended the meeting of the APF's Network of Women Parliamentarians, which was held by videoconference on January 19, 2021. Ms. Lalonde presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's final report on cyberviolence against women and children and proposed a draft resolution on the subject. The APF's Network of Women Parliamentarians approved the draft resolution; the resolution was then adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the APF on January 29, 2021.

Ms. Lalonde also presented the first draft of the Canadian Branch of the APF's report on women's economic empowerment in francophone countries. In addition to these two subjects, the parliamentarians discussed the efforts of the Working Group on the Policy to Prevent and Address Harassment in the APF, the role of women in extractive industries, and the education pathways available to girls.

YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS NETWORK

Kristina Michaud, MP, attended the meeting of the APF's Young Parliamentarians Network, which was held by video conference on January 21, 2021. Ms. Michaud presented the first draft of the Canadian Branch of the APF's report on youth participation in Parliament. At the meeting, the Network also heard from OIF representatives regarding the results of the *broad consultation of francophone youth and the public policy survey*. The Network also discussed democratic innovation in the 21st century and education in crises. Lastly, the Network discussed the possibility of developing a best practices guide for young elected representatives to encourage youth to become involved in politics.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

A. WORKING GROUP ON THE REVISION OF THE STATUTES

On January 22, 2021, the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes of the APF met to continue its review of the organization's Constitution and statutes. The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator, attended the meeting. Four broad topics appeared on the agenda: democratic oversight mechanisms, the rules governing branches and their status in the APF, organizational governance, and the special rules relating to the Bureau and the permanent delegation of the APF. During the meeting, Senator Dawson presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's positions on the recommendations. He also called for

a return to in-person meetings once the public health situation permits, to facilitate discussions in real time.

B. MEETING OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator, attended the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF, which was held by videoconference on January 26, 2021. Senator Dawson presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's final report on freedom of the press among the *Francophonie* and proposed a draft resolution on the subject. The Committee approved the draft resolution; the resolution was then adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the APF on January 29, 2021.

The Committee also reviewed the political situations within the *Francophonie*, a proposed partnership with the G5 Sahel Inter-Parliamentary Committee, as well as the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator, attended the meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the APF, which was held by videoconference on January 26, 2021. Senator Forest presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's final report on avenues for international cooperation on climate change and proposed a draft resolution on the subject. The Committee approved the draft resolution; the resolution was then adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the APF on January 29, 2021.

The Committee also discussed the economic strategy of the *Francophonie* (remarks by Henri Monceau, Director, Francophonie Digital Economy, OIF), the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the African Continental Free Trade Area and the debt of francophone countries, as well as water security for peace and development.

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Joël Godin, MP, Member and Chair of the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee, chaired the committee meeting, which was held by videoconference on January 27, 2021. The Honourable Steven Blaney, MP, and Chris d'Entremont, MP, both attended the meeting. Mr. d'Entremont presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's report on the organization of legislatures during the pandemic.

In addition to discussing topics ranging from the cooperation activities undertaken in 2020 and the openness of legislatures to the use of geolocation technology during the pandemic, the Committee reviewed the APF's draft conventions with outside institutions. Lastly, the Committee discussed the possibility of having a branch present a new report, concerning the impact of fake news on parliamentarians.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Honourable Jean Guy Dagenais, Senator, and Darrell Samson, MP, attended the meeting of the APF Committee on Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs, which was held by videoconference on January 27, 2021. At the meeting, the Committee

discussed the impact of the distribution of COVID 19 vaccines and the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on education. In addition, the Committee heard from OIF representatives regarding the Francophone Alliance for Education, French and Multilingualism in International Organizations and the Sahel youth radio initiative.

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

The Plenary Assembly of the APF met by videoconference from January 28 to 29, 2021. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Amadou Soumahoro, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and President of the APF. Seven members of the Canadian Branch of the APF took part in the Plenary Assembly: the Honourable Dennis Dawson, the Honourable Éric Forest, Alexis Brunelle Duceppe, Chris d'Entremont, Francis Drouin, Joël Godin and Marie France Lalonde.

The highlight of January 28, 2021, was the address given by Her Excellency Louise Mushikiwabo, Secretary-General of the *Francophonie*, and the question-and-answer period that followed. On behalf of the Canadian Branch of the APF, Chris d'Entremont asked the Secretary-General of the *Francophonie* about the position of French and French-language content in a digital world, and the actions taken by the OIF to protect and promote French on the digital platforms of the web giants. On behalf of the Parliamentary Affairs Commission, Joël Godin, as Chair, asked the Secretary General about children without identity and how to enhance collaboration within the *Francophonie* to create an effective structure for a birth registry throughout the *Francophonie*.

On January 29, the Plenary Assembly addressed the two items on the agenda: the adoption of the resolutions put forward by APF bodies, three of which relate to initiatives of the Canadian Branch of the APF, and the general discussion on “parliaments in francophone nations and the COVID 19 crisis: outlook for the future.”

The Plenary Assembly adopted the following resolutions:

- [Résolution sur les avenues de coopération internationale en matière de changements climatiques](#) [Resolution on avenues for international cooperation on climate change], proposed by Senator Forest;
- [Résolution sur les pertes et gaspillages alimentaires](#) [Resolution on food loss and waste];
- [Résolution sur le transport et le tourisme et son impact économique comme source de développement](#) [Resolution on transportation and tourism, and its economic impact as a driver of development];
- [Résolution sur les Systèmes de santé publics dans l'espace francophone à la lumière de la crise sanitaire de COVID-19](#) [Resolution on public health systems in francophone nations in light of the COVID 19 health crisis];
- [Résolution pour une distribution universelle et équitable des vaccins contre la COVID-19](#) [Resolution on the universal and equitable distribution of COVID 19 vaccines];

- [Résolution sur la situation politique au Burundi](#) [Resolution on the political situation in Burundi];
- [Résolution sur la situation politique en République centrafricaine](#) [Resolution on the political situation in the Central African Republic];
- [Résolution sur la liberté de la presse dans l'espace francophone](#) [Resolution on freedom of the press among the Francophonie], proposed by Senator Dawson;
- [Résolution sur la lutte contre la cyberviolence envers les femmes et les enfants dans l'espace francophone](#) [Resolution on combatting cyberviolence against women and children among the Francophonie], proposed by Marie France Lalonde; and
- [Résolution sur l'éducation en situation de crise](#) [Resolution on education in crises].

After adopting the resolutions, the Plenary Assembly held a general discussion on “parliaments in francophone countries and the COVID 19 crisis: outlook for the future.” Alexis Brunelle Duceppe, commented on behalf of the Canadian Branch of the APF. Mr. Brunelle Duceppe raised the issue of equitable access to COVID 19 vaccines. He underscored Canada’s contribution to international cooperation efforts to develop, and facilitate access to, COVID 19 vaccines, mainly through its support for the Access to COVID 19 Tools Accelerator and its participation in the COVAX initiative.

During its proceedings, the Plenary Assembly also approved the following:

- the member status of Wallis and Futuna Islands, the observer status of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the change in Catalonia’s status to associate member;
- the reports of the Parliamentary Secretary-General, Jacques Krabal (Member, France) and of the Treasurer, Mars di Bartolomeo (Member, Luxembourg); and
- the partnership agreements between the APF and the G5 Sahel Inter-Parliamentary Committee, and between the APF and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

In addition, the regional *chargés de mission* presented their respective reports to the Plenary Assembly.

Mr. Drouin took the floor to invite members to Montreal for the 47th Ordinary Session of the APF, in July 2022. He expressed his hope that the pandemic would be a thing of the past by then and that participants would be able to meet in person.

CONCLUSION

Through its participation in the 46th Annual Session of the APF, the Canadian Branch actively contributed to the APF’s work, presenting reports and proposing resolutions on issues facing all francophone nations. The reports presented by the Canadian Branch (cyberviolence against women and children, women’s economic empowerment, youth

participation in politics, freedom of the press, avenues for international cooperation on climate change, and the organization of legislatures during the pandemic) should foster dialogue on these crucial issues with the branches of various countries and regions in the *Francophonie*.

Despite the unique circumstances caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, the Canadian Branch achieved its goals of promoting the French language, encouraging the study of cultural, economic and social issues of common interest, and fostering cooperation among APF parliamentarians.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, MP

President, Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*
(CAPF)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
ACTIVITY	46th Ordinary Session of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la francophonie</i>
DESTINATION	Videoconference
DATES	From January 19 to 29, 2021
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator The Honourable Jean-Guy Dagenais, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Steven Blaney, MP Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, MP Mr. Francis Drouin, MP Mr. Chris d'Entremont, MP Mr. Joël Godin, MP Ms Marie-France Lalonde, MP Ms Kristina Michaud, MP Mr. Darrell Samson, MP
STAFF	Jean-François Lafleur, Association Secretary

Dominique Montpetit, Advisor
Gabrielle de Billy Brown, Advisor
Laurence Brosseau, Advisor

TRANSPORTATION	\$ 0
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 0
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 0