

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

Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution and Meeting of the APF Political Committee

Quebec City, Canada

From 12 to 15 May 2022

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), which participated in the meetings of the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes of the APF and of the Political Committee held in Quebec City, Canada, from 12 to 15 May 2022, is honoured to present its report.

The delegation, led by **Francis Drouin**, M.P. and Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF, also included the following parliamentarians:

- **The Honourable Dennis Dawson**, Senator;
- **Joël Godin**, M.P.;
- **Dominique Vien**, M.P.; and
- **René Villemure**, M.P..

The delegation was accompanied by Dominique Montpetit and Laurence Brosseau, advisers to the Canadian Branch, and Jean-François Lafleur, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

Parliamentarians from over 15 APF branches participated in the meeting of the Political Committee. All four APF regions—Africa, the Americas, Asia–Pacific and Europe—were represented. All four regions were also represented at the meeting of the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes.

As part of both events, the memory of Amadou Soumahoro, President of the APF and Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, was honoured with a minute of silence. Speaker Soumahoro passed away on 7 May 2022.

WORKING GROUP ON THE REVISION OF THE STATUTES OF THE ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator, participated in the proceedings of the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes of the APF on 12 and 13 May 2022. Chaired by Senator Christophe-André Frassa (France), the Working Group is mandated to examine and propose amendments to the Statutes of the APF. This was the first in-person meeting of the Working Group, which was created following the 45th Session of the APF held in Abidjan from 6 to 9 July 2019.

ORDRE DE LA PLÉIADE

On 13 May 2022, the Canadian Branch delegation attended the Ordre de la Pléiade investiture ceremony hosted by the Quebec Branch of the APF. The Ordre de la Pléiade, Ordre de la Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures, is an APF initiative to recognize individuals who distinguish themselves in pursuing the ideals of La Francophonie.

Three individuals were presented with the Chevalier de la Pléiade medal by the Quebec Branch of the APF at the ceremony: Isabelle Hudon, President of the Business Development Bank of Canada, Rémi Quirion, Chief Scientist of Quebec, and Ricardo Trogi, filmmaker and screenwriter.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Canadian Branch delegation participated in the proceedings of the APF Political Committee on 14 and 15 May 2022. The Political Committee examines political issues and the rule of law in francophone countries, relations with francophone institutions, the APF's overall priorities and legal issues concerning its by-laws and associated rules. The committee is chaired by Christophe-André Frassa, Senator (France).

At the start of the meeting, **Senator Dawson** congratulated and thanked Senator Frassa for how well he chaired the proceedings of the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes of the APF in the previous days. He also noted that this was the first in-person meeting of the group.

The Political Committee proceeded to a round table discussion during which participants raised the current political issues for their branch. **René Villemure**, M.P., participated in the round table. Mr. Villemure presented the results of the 2021 federal general election, pointing out that this is the first time that women's representation in the House of Commons surpassed 30%. Mr. Villemure also noted that at the start of the 44th Parliament, much of the focus was on the pandemic's impact on Canadians, as well as the war in Ukraine. He also informed the committee that on 27 and 28 April of this year, the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion recognizing that there is "clear and ample evidence of systematic and massive war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed against the people of Ukraine" and "that the Russian Federation is committing acts of genocide against the Ukrainian people."

The committee reviewed the political situation in francophone countries. The report on this issue focused on the developing political situations in the suspended APF branches (the Syrian Arab Republic, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Tunisia, Burkina Faso) and the branches under alert (Benin, Cambodia, Haiti, Central African Republic). Other political situations and election watches were also discussed.

The committee heard a presentation by Rémi Quirion, Chief Scientist of Quebec, on the interactions between science and parliamentary institutions. During the discussion period following the presentation, **René Villemure** asked Dr. Quirion about how to deal with uncertainty when it comes to issuing scientific recommendations or advice, and about incorporating the social sciences into scientific work. In answer to the first question, Dr. Quirion raised the importance of networking for dealing with uncertainty, especially during an unpredictable pandemic. Interactions with domestic and international colleagues were found to be especially important. As for the second question, Dr. Quirion said the pandemic has highlighted the importance of science and research across the board. He stressed the importance of improving scientific literacy and said that combatting misinformation must begin with education.

At the invitation of Quebec Branch rapporteur Éric Lefebvre, the committee also heard a presentation by Karine Perset, Head of the OECD Artificial Intelligence Policy Observatory. During the discussion period following the presentation, **Senator Dawson** asked Ms. Perset whether she felt that artificial intelligence (AI) was a unilingual research field, developing mainly in English. Ms. Perset answered by highlighting the importance of developing resources in a variety of languages, as the major AI models are currently

being developed in English and Chinese. She also said that while there are several initiatives focused on this area, the priority is to develop existing resources and open access libraries that researchers can use to create systems in other languages, including French. Following up on this question, **René Villemure** asked Ms. Perset whether such an approach ends up entrenching a situation where research takes place in English, with French merely a translation after the fact. Perset said that this is a difficult issue, as the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is dependent on and representative of the participating countries, many of them francophone. In her view, the OECD-developed framework is not anglophone, but instead represents the plurality of perspectives of the actively participating countries.

As part of its proceedings, the committee adopted and considered several reports. **Senator Dawson** presented his draft report on the use of French in international organizations. He told the committee that this report would actually be divided into two parts, for two APF bodies: the Political Committee; and the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee. In the Political Committee, Senator Dawson proposed focusing on two issues: the promotion of French at the Olympic Games and the follow-up to the reports of the Grands Témoins de la Francophonie, and the use of French in UN peacekeeping missions. Senator Dawson also proposed examining the place of French in the digital world. Reflecting on the presentations by Dr. Quirion and Ms. Perset, Senator Dawson said that it is important to strengthen the place of French in science, particularly by finding mechanisms and conducting research into the use of French in the field of AI.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, MP
Chair, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
ACTIVITY	Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution and Meeting of the APF Political Committee
DESTINATION	Quebec City, Canada
DATES	From 12 to 15 May 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Dennis Dawson

HOUSE OF
COMMONS

Mr. Joël Godin
Ms. Dominique Vien
Mr. René Villemure

STAFF

Mr. Jean-François Lafleur
Ms. Dominique Montpetit
Ms. Laurence Brosseau

TRANSPORTATION	\$ 791.68
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1 769.85
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 544.61
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 3 106.14