

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

Bureau meeting and 47th Annual Session

Kigali, Rwanda

July 5 to 9, 2022

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) that attended the APF Bureau meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, on 5 July 2022, and the 47th Session of the APF, also held in Kigali, from 6 to 9 July 2022, is honoured to present its report.

Led by **Francis Drouin**, member of Parliament (MP) and Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF, the delegation also included the following parliamentarians:

- **the Honourable Dennis Dawson**, Senator;
- **Joël Godin**, MP;
- **Marie-France Lalonde**, MP;
- **Sébastien Lemire**, MP; and
- **René Villemure**, MP.

The delegation was accompanied by Dominique Montpetit, Advisor to the Canadian Branch of the APF, and Jean-François Lafleur, Association Secretary of the Canadian Branch of the APF.

More than 350 participants from 45 APF branches attended the 47th Session. Representatives from several organizations related to the Francophonie were also in attendance. At the initiative of the Rwandan Branch of the APF, the 47th Session was held under the theme “Global governance: The role of parliaments for sustainable peace.”

Bureau business

The Bureau of the APF met on 5 July 2022. The meeting was chaired by Adama Bictogo, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d’Ivoire and President of the APF. Five members of the Canadian Branch of the APF attended the Bureau: **Francis Drouin**, as First Vice President of the APF, **Joël Godin**, as Chair of the APF’s Parliamentary Affairs Committee, **Sébastien Lemire**, as Chair of the Young Parliamentarians’ Network, **the Honourable Dennis Dawson**, replacing the Chair of the Political Committee, and **René Villemure**, as Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF.

Following the opening of the meeting, **Francis Drouin** delivered a eulogy for the late Honourable Amadou Soumahoro, who passed away during his term as President of the APF. Bureau members then observed a moment of silence in his memory. A moment of silence was also observed in memory of the late Marie-Joséphine Diallo, Secretary General of the Association des secrétaires généraux des parlements francophones and Secretary General of the National Assembly of Senegal.

During the meeting, the Bureau was informed of the 2021 activity report of the Parliamentary Secretary General. Bruno Fuchs, Acting Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF and member of Parliament (France), reviewed the activities undertaken by the APF in the last year. **René Villemure** asked him to elaborate on his vision of the role that

the APF and parliamentary diplomacy can play in calming current democratic troubles in francophone countries. Mr. Fuchs replied that the APF must be more present and must be ready to intervene in these situations, for example in good offices missions or fact-finding missions.

The Bureau also discussed its cooperation programming for 2022. On that topic, **Joël Godin** stressed the importance of the accountability of the APF toward its donors, including the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

Bureau members were also updated on the implementation progress of the APF's 2019–2022 strategic framework and the timeline for developing the next strategic framework. As such, **Joël Godin** took the floor to emphasize the importance of prioritizing action items for the next strategic framework and of developing accountability tools and performance indicators to measure the achievement of the strategic framework's objectives. **René Villemure** added that it is essential to learn from the implementation of the 2019–2022 strategic framework to ensure that the process is improved for the next strategic framework.

Bureau members also approved a list of topics based on which the APF will develop “legislative corpora” in the coming years. **Sébastien Lemire** noted that digital media and French language education should be included in the list.

The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Joël Godin and **Sébastien Lemire** reported to the Bureau on the activities and work undertaken by their respective committees and networks in 2021.

Finally, René Villemure took the floor to invite parliamentarians to meet again in Montréal for the 49th Annual Session of the APF in July 2024.

Work of the Network of Women parliamentarians

Marie-France Lalonde and **Francis Drouin** participated in the Network of Women Parliamentarians meeting on 6 July 2022. **Ms. Lalonde** presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's final report on the economic empowerment of francophone women and proposed a draft resolution on the subject. The Network approved the draft resolution; the resolution was then adopted by the Plenary Assembly on 9 July 2022. **Ms. Lalonde** also presented a new theme for a future draft report of the Canadian Branch of the APF, namely access to menstrual products for women and girls in francophone countries. The Canadian Branch of the APF will table a draft report on this topic at the next Network meeting.

In addition to these two topics, parliamentarians discussed the choice of educational pathways for girls and the impact of climate change on women and girls. The Network also approved the policy framework to combat violence against women in parliaments. This project was developed by the working group on this subject, where the Canadian Branch of the APF was represented by **Marie-France Lalonde**.

Parliamentarians attending the meeting marked the 20th anniversary of the Network. On this occasion, the first Network of Women Parliamentarians Award was presented to the Association ProFemmes/TweseHamwe.

Work of the Young Parliamentarians' Network

The Young Parliamentarians' Network met on 6 and 7 July 2022, under the chairmanship of **Sébastien Lemire**. **Francis Drouin** attended the meeting and presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's draft resolution on youth's participation in parliamentary life. This project was approved by the Network; the resolution was subsequently approved by the Plenary Assembly on 9 July 2022.

As part of the meeting, the Network also addressed the issue of democratic innovation in the 21st century for a more systematic citizen initiative. The parliamentarians present also followed up on the development of the good practices guide for future young parliamentarians. This work began at the Network's meeting in Papeete (French Polynesia) in April 2022.

During the meeting, **Mr. Drouin** has committed to being the voice of young parliamentarians and to listen to them during his term as President of the APF, which began at the end of the first day of the Plenary Assembly on 8 July 2022.

Work of the Political Committee

The Political Committee met on 7 July 2022, under the chairmanship of **the Honourable Dennis Dawson**, who was replacing the Committee Chair Christophe-André Frassa, Senator (France). The Political Committee proceeded to a round table discussion during which the participants discussed the political news of their APF branch. **The Honourable Dennis Dawson** participated in this round table. He shared information on the invocation of the *Emergencies Act* and the oversight mechanisms under the Act. He also shared the latest developments on the health restrictions related to COVID-19 in the Parliament of Canada.

Senator Dawson presented the draft report on the use of French in international organizations. Since the Committee meeting held in May 2022, information regarding the promotion of French at the Olympic Games, the follow-up on the Grands Témoins de la Francophonie reports and the use of French in United Nations peacekeeping missions has been added to the draft report. The Committee decided to continue to work on this draft report at its next meeting. A questionnaire will be sent to APF branches to gather information on the above-mentioned topics.

The Committee also examined the political situation in francophone countries. The report on this issue focused on the evolution of the political situation in the suspended branches of the APF (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia) and the branches placed under alert (Benin, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Haiti).

The Canadian Branch of the APF has been working with the Swiss Branch of the APF since 2020 to prepare a report and resolution on the jurisdiction and actions of parliaments during emergencies. Consequently, **René Villemure** presented the work of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee to the Political Committee. He emphasized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parliamentary operations.

Work of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee

The Parliamentary Affairs Committee met on 7 July 2022, under the chairmanship of **Joël Godin**. **René Villemure** participated in the meeting and presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's report on the organization of parliaments in pandemic times as well as the resolution on the powers and actions of parliaments during emergencies. This resolution was prepared jointly with the Swiss Branch of the APF. The Committee approved the draft resolution, which was then adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the APF on 9 July 2022.

The Committee also addressed the following topics: the openness of parliaments, the effects of disinformation on the parliamentary environment and the protection of whistleblowers. On the latter topic, **René Villemure** informed the Committee that the Parliament of Canada passed legislation in 2005, namely, the *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act*, to protect whistleblowers. He noted that the *Act* also created the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, an independent federal agency. **Mr. Villemure** raised several concerns related to whistleblowing, including the fact that the more specific the whistleblowing, the easier it is to identify the whistleblower, and that it is important to be concerned about false allegations.

Work of the Cooperation and Development Committee

Francis Drouin participated in the APF's Cooperation and Development Committee meeting held on 7 July 2022. During the round table discussion on the economic situation of francophone countries, **Mr. Drouin** presented the Canadian situation. He noted Canada's low unemployment rate, as well as its labour shortages and inflation situation. **Mr. Drouin** also presented the first draft report of the Canadian Branch of the APF on the impacts of climate change on island, coastal and riparian areas in francophone countries. The Committee decided to continue to work on this draft report at its next meeting.

The Committee also addressed the issues of rural regions' inhabitancy and vitality, agroecology and its role in designing and managing sustainable food systems and agricultural systems that are more resilient to the challenges of climate change. In addition, maritime issues related to climate and environmental protection, land conflicts in francophone countries and international trade negotiations were discussed.

Work of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee

Marie-France Lalonde participated in the APF's Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee meeting on 7 July 2022. **Ms. Lalonde** presented the Canadian Branch of the APF's draft report on the use and promotion of French in francophone countries. Work on this topic will continue at future Committee meetings.

Members of the Committee also discussed several issues of interest to francophone parliaments, including the restitution of cultural property looted during colonization, the implementation of the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, sports and the Francophonie, and school dropout rates.

During the discussions on the draft resolution on school dropout, **Marie-France Lalonde** pointed out that one of the reasons for girls dropping out of school is the lack of access to menstrual products or appropriate sanitary facilities. She informed the Committee that the Canadian Branch of the APF will be working on this issue within the Network of

Women Parliamentarians. **Ms. Lalonde** added that girls and women may also drop out of school due to pregnancy, which is sometimes the result of sexual assault by professionals in positions of authority.

Committee members also heard from representatives of the OIF who presented the *Guide sur la sécurité des journalistes et de l'intégrité de l'information en période électorale* and the *Guide pratique pour la consolidation de l'état civil dans l'espace francophone : enjeux et perspectives pour les acteurs de la Francophonie*.

Work of the Plenary Assembly

The APF Plenary Assembly opened on 8 July 2022 under the chairmanship of Adama Bictogo, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and President of the APF. Following the opening of the meeting, **Francis Drouin** delivered a eulogy for the late Honourable Amadou Soumahoro, who passed away during his term as President of the APF. **Mr. Drouin** presented a book of condolences to the Ivorian Branch on behalf of the APF.

During its first day of meetings, the Plenary Assembly approved the membership of the Parliament of Montenegro as an associate member of the APF and the transition of the National Assembly of Kosovo from observer to associate member status.

In addition, the Plenary Assembly held a general debate on the theme of the Annual Session: "Global governance and the role of parliaments for sustainable peace." **Marie-France Lalonde** intervened in the debate on behalf of the Canadian Branch of the APF. During her speech, **Ms. Lalonde** highlighted the challenges that parliamentary institutions have faced since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, she addressed the challenges of adapting to a virtual work environment and the dissatisfaction of some groups of population with the health measures imposed to fight COVID-19. **Ms. Lalonde** explained that this situation has highlighted how interconnected societies are, as well as the need to develop multilateral solutions to global crises. She asserted that interparliamentary organizations such as the APF can, and should, play a leading role as parliamentary diplomacy is essential to ensure world peace.

The last item on the 8 July agenda was the election of the new APF president. On this occasion, the Plenary Assembly confirmed the transfer of the APF presidency from the Ivorian Branch to the Canadian Branch. **Francis Drouin** was elected as the new President of the APF. In his speech following his election, **Mr. Drouin** acknowledged the work and dedication of his predecessors, the late Amadou Soumahoro and Adama Bictogo, who both had to lead the APF through times of crisis. He also thanked the Rwandan Branch and the General Secretariat of the APF for organizing the Annual Session. Finally, **Mr. Drouin** pledged to advance the causes at the forefront of the APF's work, including democracy, human rights, cooperation and francophone solidarity.

On 9 July 2022, the Plenary Assembly was chaired by **Francis Drouin**, Chair of the Canadian Branch and new President of the APF. The day began with a presentation by Augustin Iyamuremye, President of the Senate of Rwanda, on Rwanda's resilience regarding its socio-economic transformation.

The highlight of 9 July 2022 was the address given by Her Excellency Louise Mushikiwabo, Secretary General of the Francophonie, and the question period that followed. The Secretary General of the Francophonie organized her speech around three points: democracy and human rights in francophone countries, sustainable development, and the importance of digital technology. In particular, she insisted on the poor health of democracy in francophone countries and specified that the proliferation of false information prevents democracy from working as it should. She also stressed the role that the APF can play in raising awareness and supporting parliaments in developing legal frameworks for sustainable development. Her Excellency Louise Mushikiwabo also insisted on the unavoidable role of digital technology in developing the French language and solidarity in francophone countries. Finally, she stressed the need for the OIF and the APF to work together in developing the next strategic framework of the Francophonie.

On behalf of the Canadian Branch of the APF, **René Villemure** asked the Secretary General of the Francophonie about the place that French and francophone content must occupy in an increasingly interconnected world and the actions taken by the OIF to protect and promote this place.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee and as its Chair, **Joël Godin** asked the Secretary General of the Francophonie about the progress of OIF-led initiatives to fight disinformation and about how the APF can support the OIF in this fight as well as support democracy in the Francophonie.

On behalf of the Young Parliamentarians' Network and as its chair, **Sébastien Lemire** asked the Secretary General of the Francophonie to speak about concrete actions carried out by the OIF in favour of youth and about future actions the OIF intends to undertake to meet the expectations of young francophones who represent nearly 60% of the population of francophone countries.

Responses to the questions posed to the Secretary General of La Francophonie will be forwarded to the APF in writing in the coming weeks.

In addition, the Plenary Assembly adopted eight resolutions and one declaration:

- [Resolution on the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights, the rule of law and democracy](#) [translation];
- [Resolution on school dropout rates in the Francophonie: the situation and gender-specific solutions](#) [translation];
- [Resolution on open parliaments: bringing institutions and populations closer together](#) [translation];
- [Resolution on the powers and actions of parliaments during emergencies](#) [translation], a joint initiative of the Swiss and Canadian branches of the APF presented by Nicolas Walder and **René Villemure**;
- [Resolution on the vitality of rural regions: testimony of the Francophonie for sustainable rural development](#) [translation];

- [Resolution on the policy framework to prevent and combat harassment in francophone parliaments](#) [translation];
- [Resolution on the economic empowerment of francophone women](#) [translation], an initiative of the Canadian Branch of the APF presented by **Marie-France Lalonde**;
- [Resolution on youth participation in parliamentary life](#) [translation], an initiative of the Canadian Branch of the APF presented by **Francis Drouin** and **Sébastien Lemire**; and
- [Declaration on the inclusion of women in climate discussions](#) [translation].

Finally, **René Villemure** took the floor to invite parliamentarians to meet again in Montréal for the 49th Annual Session of the APF in July 2024.

Conclusion

Through its participation in the 47th Annual Session of the APF, the Canadian Branch was able to contribute to the work of the APF by presenting draft reports on issues that affect all citizens of francophone countries. In this regard, the presentation of the Canadian Branch's reports and resolutions opened an important dialogue with the branches representing various countries and regions of the Francophonie. Through discussions between members of the Canadian delegation and other participants at the Annual Session of the APF, the Canadian Branch was able to achieve its objectives of promoting the French language, encouraging the study of cultural, economic and social issues of common interest in order to foster cooperation among APF parliamentarians and to establish a dialogue of cultures.

More generally, the Canadian Branch of the APF was able to participate in a dialogue aimed at promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and at strengthening cooperation and solidarity in the countries of the Francophonie.

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	Bureau meeting and 47th Annual Session
DESTINATION	Kigali, Rwanda
DATES	5 to 9 July 2022

DELEGATION

SENATE

Senator Dennis Dawson

HOUSE OF
COMMONS

Francis Drouin
Joël Godin
Marie-France Lalonde
Sébastien Lemire
René Villemure

STAFF

Jean-François Lafleur, Executive Secretary
Dominique Montpetit, Association Analyst

TRANSPORTATION

[Enter Amount here]

ACCOMMODATION

[Enter Amount here]

HOSPITALITY

[Enter Amount here]

PER DIEMS

[Enter Amount here]

OFFICIAL GIFTS

[Enter Amount here]

TOTAL

[Enter Total Amount here]