

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

Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Brussels, Belgium

May 23 to 25, 2022

Report

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), which attended the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee meeting held at the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation from May 23 to 25, 2022, is honoured to present its report. The delegation was composed of **Joël Godin**, Member of Parliament and Chair of the aforementioned Committee, **Darrell Samson**, Member of Parliament and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch and Jean-François Lafleur, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

Numerous parliamentarians from the four regions of the Francophonie participated in this meeting. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were represented at the meeting: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Benin, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Djibouti, France, Madagascar, Morocco, Mauritius, Niger, New Caledonia, Quebec, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Romania, Rwanda and Senegal.

A message from the Committee Chair

Joël Godin, Member of Parliament (Canada) and Committee Chair, welcomed participants and opened the proceedings by proposing a minute of silence in memory of the late Amadou Soumahoro, President of the APF, who passed away on May 7, and the late Marie-Joséphine Diallo, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Senegal and President of the Association des Secrétaires généraux de parlements francophones. Following this minute of silence, the assembly adopted the agenda, minutes and record of decisions from the virtual meeting held on May 31, 2021.

The Chair provided an update on the work of the working group responsible for reforming the Constitution and noted the impacts of this work on the Committee. Senator Pierre Flambeau Ngayap (Cameroon) and Senator Nadia El-Yousfi (Belgium/ Wallonia-Brussels Federation) raised a number of questions, notably regarding the Committee's role in election observation missions. Mr. Ngayap said that the working group could have been inclusive and included a representative of each committee. Other questions were also raised by members.

Joël Godin also informed the Committee about the future strategic framework and called for input on the legislative corpora project.

Presentation and review of draft reports

Geneviève Hébert, Member of the National Assembly (Quebec), presented the final results of her study on open parliaments and the creation of closer ties between institutions and populations. The resulting report highlights best practices to adopt in terms of ensuring that parliaments are open and accessible to citizens.

Darrell Samson, Member of Parliament (Canada), stressed that it was important for a significant number of branches to respond to the various questionnaires proposed by the rapporteurs so that the successes and challenges of the different branches could be shared.

Mathieu Ouimet, member of the Réseau international en conseil scientifique, gave a presentation on the research project on institutional mechanisms and infrastructure for the use of scientific information in francophone parliaments.

Nadia El-Yousfi, Member of Parliament (Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation), went over her report on the effects of disinformation on parliaments. Geneviève Hébert, Member of the National Assembly (Quebec), pointed out that this study has two components: the effects on citizens as well as the effects on parliamentary institutions. Both members stressed that social media networks are not the cause of disinformation, but rather serve as a vehicle for disinformation.

Darrell Samson presented the final version of the joint report by the Canadian Branch and the Swiss Branch on organizing parliaments in a pandemic. Mr. Samson stressed the importance of the report, adding that it serves as the basis for a further consideration on the state of emergency preparedness of member parliaments of the APF. The report will be the subject of a draft resolution during the next annual session to be held in Kigali (Rwanda).

Speakers

Antoine Michon, Director of Political Affairs and Democratic Governance at the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), gave a presentation on various collaborations between OIF and APF. He also addressed the involvement of youth and women in politics.

He reviewed the development of the OIF strategic framework and the creation of a working group for that purpose. Sedemi Medegan Fagla, Member of Parliament (Benin), expressed concern about the current status of G5 Sahel, notably due to the withdrawal of Mali. Mr. Michon said that the Francophonie should remain involved in issues related to the Sahel and continue work in that regard. Medegan Fagla said that she would like efforts on female representation in politics to continue.

Anne Vagman, Principal Auditor, Head of Division, Council of State of Belgium, briefed members of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee on the advisory role of the legislative branch within the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Yannick Trillet, Principal Auditor in the Belgian Court of Audit, discussed the statutes and missions of the court and gave a presentation on the various missions of the Belgian Court of Audit. These missions focus on ensuring accountability for all financial and legal matters involving public officials as well as on organizing the work performed by public officials.

Partnerships involving APF and external institutions

In the context of the draft framework agreement between the Parliamentary Affairs Committee and the Research Chair in Parliamentary Studies at the University of Luxemburg, Professor Philippe Poirier gave a presentation on the master's program in parliamentary studies. He presented this joint program, offered in collaboration with various universities in Africa, America and Europe. The program has been a success because it has been able to enrol the maximum number of students for the first two years

of its existence. The agreement was adopted by the Committee and will be recommended for final adoption at the plenary session.

Further to a presentation by **Joël Godin**, Committee Chair, the Committee reviewed the draft agreement with the Union des conseils économiques et sociaux et institutions similaires francophones (UCESIF) concerning francophone youth ambassadors. **Mr. Samson** questioned the relevance of the program, given the lack of planning, its origin and the fact that it would be competing with one of APF's existing institutions, the Francophone Youth Parliament. The civilian nature of the program also contradicts APF's parliamentary and multilateral mission. It was agreed that the francophone youth ambassadors program would be discontinued.

Parliamentary cooperation programs

The chair reported on various cooperation initiatives that took place despite the pandemic. Many of these initiatives were notably undertaken for the benefit of women and youth parliamentarians. A number of election observation missions and contact missions were also carried out.

The Canadian and Cameroonian branches will work on a draft report with a view to establishing an assessment grid for APF cooperation programs.

Electoral missions in francophone countries

This subject was raised repeatedly by the committee. For the benefit of new members, Ms. El-Yousfi went over the desired changes and the progress made toward easing tensions between the OIF and APF. However, one point of tension persists with respect to the equality of the partnership.

The Geoffrey Dieudonné award

Once again, members applauded the creation of this award, which provides for a one-week internship in any francophone parliament of the winner's choice, to be approved by the host parliament and paid for by the APF. The new winner of the award, Diana Fandro, a public servant from the Parliament of Madagascar, will be welcomed at the Canadian Parliament on the date of her choice in 2022.

The Chair of the Committee proposed the creation of a logo for the Geoffrey Dieudonné award and the creation of a structure that would help promote this award.

Preparation of the question to be addressed to the Secretary General of the Francophonie

The Committee's draft question on disinformation was adopted.

Legislative corpora

The Chair of the Committee provided a review of this project, and the Administrative Secretary General provided some explanations.

Date and location of the next meeting

The date and location have yet to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, M.P.
President, Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
Chair, Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

On behalf of
Joël Godin, M.P.
Chair, Parliamentary Affairs Committee
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
DESTINATION	Brussels, Belgium
DATES	May 23 to 25, 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Joël Godin Darrell Samson
STAFF	Jean-François Lafleur
TRANSPORTATION	\$19,346.24
ACCOMMODATION	\$4,249.82
PER DIEMS	\$1,770.65
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$191.95
MISCELLANEOUS	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$25,558.66

