

Section canadienne de
l'Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie



Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie

Report of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

39th Session of the APF America Regional Assembly

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

August 7 to 9, 2024

Report

The Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (Canadian Branch) attended the 39th APF Regional Assembly of the Americas in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, from August 7 to 9, 2024. The Canadian delegation consisted of five parliamentarians:

- The Honourable Claude Carignan, Senator
- Mario Beaulieu, M.P.;
- Lena Metlege Diab, M.P.;
- Marie-France Lalonde, M.P.; and
- Darrell Samson, M.P.

The delegation was accompanied by Julie Pelletier, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch, and Laurence Brosseau, Advisor to the Canadian Branch.

CONFERENCE OF BRANCH CHAIRS MEETING

On August 7, 2024, the meeting of the Conference of Branch Chairs of the Americas Region (CBC) was chaired by **Darrell Samson**, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch. **Marie-France Lalonde**, M.P., also attended the CBC as Acting Chair of the Canadian Branch. The meeting provided an opportunity to share updates on the work initiated during previous CBC meetings, to review the work accomplished during the last statutory meetings of the APF and to engage in discussions on future activities pertaining to the Americas Region. Other than Canada, five APF branches were in attendance: Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec.

Stéphane Sarrazin, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and APF Regional Delegate for the Americas, presented a summary of the Bureau meetings and the plenary session held in Montreal on July 5, 8 and 9, 2024, respectively. These meetings were part of the 49th Annual Session of the APF, which was hosted by the Parliament of Canada. Mr. Sarrazin went over the opinion that the APF intends to deliver during the October 2024 Francophonie Summit on the political situation in Haiti and the new positions parliamentarians from the Americas Region now hold in the APF Bureau:

- First Vice-President (Quebec);
- Vice-President (Canada);
- Member (Nova Scotia);
- Chair of the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee (Canada);
- Acting Chair of the Network of Women Parliamentarians (Quebec); and
- Regional Delegate for the Americas (New Brunswick).

The Regional Delegate then presented highlights from the Americas Region's activities for the period from April to July 2024. He also presented the statements of revenues and

expenses for fiscal years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, as well as estimates for 2024–2025.

Marie-France Lalonde proposed that the Americas Region adopt rules regarding travel; add the attendance of two parliamentarians at the annual conference of the [Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones](#) in the budget; and support the participation of two women parliamentarians from the Region in the Network of Women Parliamentarians or Leadership Workshop activities. She also encouraged members to include the attendance of the Regional Delegate for the Americas at the Africa Regional Assembly in the 2025–2026 budget.

The CBC then held a discussion on parliamentary news from the Americas Region branches. **Marie-France Lalonde** shared updates from the Parliament of Canada that had happened since the last CBC meeting. Since the meeting in April 2024, 13 bills on topics such as establishing a national council for reconciliation, implementing the budget, creating a Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate position, creating sustainable jobs and fighting foreign interference, as well as racism and environmental justice, had received Royal Assent. Also, 80 committee reports were presented to the House of Commons and over 30 to the Senate. Several appointments of senior officials were also announced. **Marie-France Lalonde** also presented an overview of the Canadian Branch's involvement in the APF's activities in 2024.

CBC participants then discussed the various items on the agenda, including leadership positions for the Americas Region; reviewing the Region's rules; the sustainable development policy; follow-up on the three declarations adopted during the 38th Session of the APF Regional Assembly of the Americas in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, United States, specifically the commitment to a closer relationship with the Africa Region of the APF; and the 2023–2030 Americas Region and APF action plans. Lastly, the schedule for upcoming regional and international activities was presented as follows: World Acadian Congress (August 2024), election observation mission to Moldova (October 2024), relationship-building mission with the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica (October 2024), Bureau meeting in Vietnam (January 2025) and the 40th Session of the Regional Assembly of the Americas in Quebec City (September 2025). **Marie-France Lalonde** wrapped up this agenda item by informing participants that the Canadian Branch would evaluate the possibility of hosting the Bureau meeting in January 2027.

Lastly, Hadjer Remili, advisor at the APF General Secretariat, spoke about the symposium on citizen mobility to be held by the APF on October 3, 2024, on the margins of the Francophonie Summit, as well as the call for cooperation that would soon be sent out to the branches.

39th Regional Assembly of the Americas

The Regional Assembly of the Americas was held on August 7 and 8, 2024. Mr. Sarrazin began the meeting with opening remarks. The Honourable Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Chair of the Ontario Branch of the APF and Ontario Minister of Long-Term Care, also welcomed the participants and then presented the theme for the meeting, which was “the socio-economic impact of francophone immigration.”

A. First working session: initial welcome for newcomers

The topic for the first working session was “initial welcome for newcomers.” The session was moderated by France Gélinas, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and member of the Ontario Branch of the APF. Three panellists gave presentations as part of this session:

- Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President, Legal Aid, Employment and Newcomer Services from the [Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto](#);
- Gouled Hassan, General Director, [Contact interculturel Francophone de Sudbury](#); and
- Élise Edimo, Coordinator, Welcoming Francophone Communities pilot project, [Réseau de soutien à l’immigration francophone de l’Est de l’Ontario](#).

The panellists spoke about their missions and the services their respective organizations provide as well as their initiatives and newcomer programs.

After the presentations, the Honourable **Claude Carignan** asked the panellists if they provided services to francophone Canadians who are not immigrants who settle in their regions and if these Canadians would eventually be called upon to help welcome newcomers. Ms. Edimo said that services are indeed offered to francophone Canadians who move to Ontario; she also mentioned that they pair francophone Canadian families with immigrants. Mr. Hassan said that providing services to francophones “from here and elsewhere” is part of the Contact interculturel Francophone de Sudbury’s mission. He also said that francophone Canadians moving to Sudbury can volunteer for his organization. Lastly, Ms. Nauthoo said that it was a good question worth further consideration.

Senator Carignan also asked the panellists about the value of fostering an approach that includes companies and employers when recruiting newcomers, especially during international recruitment activities. Ms. Edimo said that although various approaches could be worthwhile, employer involvement can sometimes affect a newcomer’s connection to the community and their sense of belonging.

Marie-France Lalonde mentioned some of the federal government’s recent francophone immigration initiatives. She also stated that it would be appropriate for the Regional Assembly of the Americas to look into the matter of recognizing foreign credentials, in particular to qualify with professional associations, since it struck her as unacceptable that newcomers cannot work in their fields of expertise.

Lastly, **Mario Beaulieu** asked a question on the information pre-arrival services provide. Ms. Nauthoo said that representatives are asked to share services offered in French as part of the pre-arrival services her organization offers.

B. Presentation of the resolutions adopted by the Francophone Youth Parliament

The 10th Francophone Youth Parliament of the APF was organized as part of the 49th Annual Session of the APF in July 2024 in Montreal, Quebec. Over 80 young people from across La Francophonie attended the event.

Joyce Motuke Malembe and Geneviève Stacey, youth representatives from Ontario, were asked to present the resolutions adopted during the 10th edition to Regional Assembly of the Americas attendees. The resolutions were the following:

- Tackling insecurity for young people;
- Promoting official and popular uses of the French language in the 21st century;
- Regulating influencer activities; and
- Promoting young people's civic engagement in the real world instead of on social media.

C. Second working session: integrating Francophone newcomers into the community

The topic for the second working session was “integrating francophone newcomers into the community.” It was moderated by the Honourable Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, and had these three following panellists:

- Daniel Giroux, President, [Collège Boréal](#);
- Saint-Phard Désir, Chair, [Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton](#); and
- Didier Koffi, President and Founder, [Akwaba Community](#).

The panellists spoke about their various services and newcomer integration successes during their presentations. Foreign credential recognition and access to affordable housing were some of the main integration barriers raised by some stakeholders.

After the presentation, **Marie-France Lalonde** asked Mr. Giroux if access to affordable housing for international students has been studied. Mr. Giroux said that since Collège Boréal is in 26 communities across Ontario, the strategies to make it easier for students to access housing are wide-ranging. He pointed to an online system in particular, as well as strategies specific to the Toronto area. For example, class schedules are sometimes arranged over three days to limit a student's travel since affordable housing is often far from downtown.

Marie-France Lalonde also asked the panellists about the issues involved in recognizing foreign credentials. Mr. Désir noted that newcomers are discouraged in this respect and said that measures should be implemented so a person can work in their field as a learner while simultaneously moving through the recognition process. Mr. Koffi also said that the recognition process should be made faster.

Senator Carignan touched on the fact that nationals from certain countries can obtain study permits quicker through a fast-track process and wondered whether certain French-speaking countries would benefit from such an initiative. The list of countries eligible for this fast-track process is posted on the Collège Boréal website. Mr. Giroux said it was possible that francophones living in some of these countries might benefit from this process, and that the college's goal is to diversify where its francophone students come from. On that same point, **Marie-France Lalonde** said that the federal government is studying the possibility of establishing agreements with other countries.

Lastly, **Mario Beaulieu** raised the issue of the “disproportionate” refusal of study permits for African nationals and asked the panellists if there had been any improvements in this

regard. Mr. Giroux said that he has seen major improvements on this issue in recent years and that acceptance rates are rising every year. Mr. Koffi also said that he has seen improvements but that there is more work to be done.

D. Capacity-building workshop: The immigration process in Canada

The Regional Assembly of the Americas participants attended a capacity-building workshop on the immigration process in Canada. This workshop was facilitated by Shaloma Gauthier, Manager, Immigration Promotion and Employer Outreach Unit at the Ontario [Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#).

Marie-France Lalonde asked Ms. Gauthier about the recognition of foreign credentials. Ms. Gauthier gave the example of foreign nurses, for whom a one-pager had been written to detail the credential recognition process in Ontario. Events have also been set up to educate health care employers about the processes they must follow. **Marie-France Lalonde** also mentioned the shortage of francophone teachers in Ontario.

Senator Carignan asked Ms. Gauthier about the requirement for certain categories of immigrants to remain in the same position to obtain permanent residency. He also asked if there were any statistics on the interprovincial movements of immigrants and retention rates in Ontario. Ms. Gauthier spoke about the possibility of getting a promotion with the same employer and said that she would check with the relevant team to gather the data for the requested statistics.

Lastly, **Mario Beaulieu** asked Ms. Gauthier if she had noticed that a significant number of francophone immigrants were moving from one province to another, particularly leaving Quebec to settle in Ontario. Ms. Gauthier said that there is considerable inter-provincial movement in every direction and mentioned that because of its unique immigration model, statistics for Quebec are not always available.

E. Third working session: Integrating young Francophone newcomers in early childhood and school

The topic for the third and final working session was “integrating young Francophone newcomers in early childhood and school.” The session was moderated by Lucille Collard, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and member of the Ontario Branch of the APF. It had two panellists:

- Mélinda Chartrand, Niagara School Board Trustee, [Conseil Scolaire Catholique MonAvenir](#); and
- Samia Ouled Ali, President, [Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario](#).

Senator Carignan asked the panellists about recruiting francophone teachers, especially qualified teachers. Ms. Chartrand said that the system is short approximately 1,500 teachers. However, she mentioned that qualified newcomers should be joining the faculties over the next few years. Ms. Ouled Ali said that recruiting and retaining francophone teachers is a major challenge. She mentioned that it is essential to raise the profile of this profession to make it more attractive.

Mario Beaulieu asked the panellists if they could speak about the situation of students eligible for French-language education in a minority setting (francophone rights holders). Ms. Chartrand said that a sizeable percentage of rights holders in the Toronto area are not in the francophone system. One of the challenges is the state of francophone schools, which are often very old.

Senator Carignan also asked the panellists about rights holders to understand why they are not in the francophone system. Ms. Ouled Ali said that choosing a school system is up to the parents. Given how few there are, francophone schools are not usually the students' neighbourhood school. Some parents may prefer sending their children to a school that is closer to their homes. According to Ms. Ouled Ali, more French-language schools need to be opened, so that right holders can access French-language schools close to where they live. She also pointed out that students admitted via an admissions committee do not take the place of right holders in the system. Ms. Chartrand said that one of the challenges they face is that many francophone rights holders come from exogamous families.

Lena Metlege Diab praised the panellists for the work they do in their communities. She also asked if the provinces are working together on francophone education and early childhood, since they face many of the same challenges. Ms. Chartrand said that the [Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones](#) is working on sharing best practices between school boards. She also said that directors of education meet to discuss and come up with solutions to their shared challenges. Ms. Ouled Ali also said that she was collaborating with colleagues across Canada, so that the expertise is shared across francophone institutions in minority settings.

F. Wrapping up the meeting of the Regional Assembly of the Americas

When the working sessions were completed, Mr. Sarrazin presented his activity report, which detailed the highlights of the Americas Region's activities for the period from April to July 2024. He then gave the floor to **Senator Carignan**, who represented the Americas Region at the convention of the [Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française](#) held in Winnipeg from October 19 to 20, 2023. **Senator Carignan** reported that he had attended a round table on Indigenous education in French in Manitoba and a workshop on the professional integration of immigrant teachers. He also heard testimonials on initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion in schools.

The participants also adopted the Americas Region statement of revenues and expenses for fiscal years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, as well as the amended estimates for 2024–2025.

Lastly, the participants discussed future activities for the Americas Region.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, M.P.
Chair, Canadian Branch, Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
ACTIVITY	39th Session of the APF Regional Assembly of the Americas
DESTINATION	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
DATES	August 7 to 9, 2024
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Claude Carignan
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mario Beaulieu Lena Metlege Diab Marie-France Lalonde Darrell Samson
STAFF	Julie Pelletier Laurence Brosseau
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 968.32
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,098.84
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 614.18
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,239.46
TOTAL	\$ 7,920.80