

Section canadienne de  
l'Assemblée parlementaire  
de la Francophonie



Canadian Branch of the  
Assemblée parlementaire  
de la Francophonie

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

## **Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee**

**Podgorica, Montenegro**

**April 24 to 26, 2024**

# Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), which attended the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee proceedings held in Podgorica, Montenegro, from April 24 to 26, 2024, is honoured to present its report.

The Canadian delegation consisted of two parliamentarians:

- **Joël Godin**, Member of Parliament
- **Darrell Samson**, Member of Parliament

The parliamentarians were accompanied by Gabrielle de Billy Brown, advisor to the Canadian Branch.

Parliamentarians from around 15 branches of the APF took part in the Committee's proceedings.

## PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The APF Parliamentary Committee's meeting began with a solemn session, with opening remarks from Andrija Mandic, Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro; Aleksa Becic, Vice-President of the Government of Montenegro and former speaker of Parliament; and Simonida Kordic, Chair of the Montenegro Branch of the APF.

The Parliamentary Affairs Committee's proceedings were chaired by **Joël Godin** and opened with a round table on parliamentary activities, which is new for the Committee. Each branch was invited to share information on such areas as changes in how their parliaments operate, work organization and the composition of political groups. **Darrell Samson** spoke first to thank the Montenegro Branch for its welcome and to underscore the significant work that goes into organizing a meeting of an APF body in a parliament that does not have French as a working language. He then shared with the other participants that the House of Commons had recently adopted amendments to its Standing Orders to make the hybrid format of parliamentary business permanent. Mr. **Samson** also spoke about the election of the Honourable Greg Fergus as the Speaker of the House of Commons and the first Black Canadian to take on this role. He also noted that Bill C-65 to amend the Canada Elections Act had been tabled and will change certain procedures for voting and modify certain offences related to foreign interference. Lastly, Mr. Samson informed the parliamentarians of last year's adoption of [An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages](#). On this last item, both **Joël Godin** and **Darrell Samson** emphasized the collaborative work that led to progress on this file that is essential for all francophones across Canada.

Members of the Policy Committee then heard about updates to various draft reports in preparation within the Committee. First, Geneviève Hébert (MNA, Quebec) presented the latest version of her draft report on the impacts of disinformation on parliaments. This report will culminate in the tabling of a resolution on this issue at the next meeting of the Committee.

**Darrell Samson** informed participants of progress regarding work on the Canadian Branch's draft report on the evaluation of cooperation actions undertaken by the APF. He announced that the questionnaire prepared by the Canadian Branch would be sent to branches to collect responses and that a final draft would be presented next July. At the suggestion of the Canadian Branch, the Parliamentary Affairs Committee invited experts to contribute to the discussion on the evaluation of cooperation programs. The Parliamentary Affairs Committee therefore heard from Andrea Wolfe, an expert from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in charge of the European parliamentary cooperation program Inter Pares, and Mirko Lalatovic, representing the Montenegrin Parliament, about the capacity building program that supported the Montenegrin Parliament. **Darrell Samson** took the floor to thank the speakers for their presentation, which will contribute to the Committee's work.

The Parliamentary Affairs Committee then focused on another draft report on the role of parliaments in the promotion of the French language. Committee members agreed on the need to consider a different format from regular reports for such a project. Parliamentarians agreed to explore the idea of creating a best practices guide on promoting the French language. In this regard, **Joël Godin** highlighted some of the existing practices in the Parliament of Canada, including access to language courses for all parliamentarians and the duty to promote French as a result of the passing of [An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages](#).

The Committee also discussed APF's memorandum for the 2024 Francophonie Summit, which will take place in Villers-Cotterêts and Paris in October under the theme "Améliorer la mobilité citoyenne dans la Francophonie pour promouvoir la création, l'innovation et l'entrepreneuriat" [Enhancing citizen mobility in the French-speaking world to promote creation, innovation and entrepreneurship]. The Committee Chair **Joël Godin** reiterated the need for as many branches as possible to complete the questionnaire prepared by the Quebec Branch to improve the memorandum. The matter of visa issuance in francophone member countries was raised as it has implications for participation at the 49th Session of the APF in Montreal. The Committee discussed the possibility of suggesting the organization of a meeting of Francophonie ministers of interior modelled on the [Conference of Ministers of Education of French-speaking States and Governments](#) and the [Conférence des ministres de la jeunesse et des sports de la Francophonie](#) [IN FRENCH].

As discussed during the plenary session held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in July 2023, the APF's Young Parliamentarians Network was tasked with advocating for citizen mobility and will seek perspectives on the APF memorandum on behalf of all bodies.

The Committee's mandate also includes following up on partnership agreements the APF has entered into with other organizations. In this regard, the Committee focused on three draft agreements that are currently on the table with:

- Université Senghor
- The Fédération internationale des professeurs de français.
- The Réseau francophone international en conseil scientifique

Committee members reviewed the three drafts and asked for some minor changes to the texts prior to final adoption.

Lastly, as part of preparations for the APF Plenary Session, the Committee discussed the choice of the question that will be put to the Secretary General of La Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo. Discussions initially focused on the broader place of French in the world. In this regard, **Darrell Samson** shared information on the situation of minority francophones, and the Acadian community in particular, with the Committee. He also explained that in Canada, there are francophones from coast to coast and that students can study in French anywhere in the country.

Two key themes for the question to put to the Secretary General of La Francophonie eventually emerged from the discussions among Committee members, namely the importance of parliamentary diplomacy as an instrument to complement government instruments and the expanded use of digital tools to facilitate citizen access to data from public institutions. Following a proposal from **Joël Godin**, by consensus, the Committee elected to merge the two themes into a single question subsumed under a quote from Léopold Sédar Senghor, former president of Senegal, which is the most meaningful for the APF: “The people, through their elected leaders, will press governments to move forward.” [Translation]

Finally, the Quebec Branch raised concerns that reports and resolutions adopted by the Committee, and the APF at large, were not being shared. As Committee Chair, **Joël Godin** acknowledged the issue and committed to convey the message on behalf of the Committee; he also encouraged all branches to do so as well.

The next Parliamentary Affairs Committee meeting will take place in Montreal, Canada, on July 7, 2024, as part of the APF Plenary Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, MP

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

### **Travel Costs**

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|--------------------|---|
| <b>ASSOCIATION</b> | Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie |
| <b>ACTIVITY</b>    | Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee                    |
| <b>DESTINATION</b> | Podgorica, Montenegro   |
| <b>DATES</b>       | April 24 to 26, 2024  |

**DELEGATION**HOUSE OF  
COMMONSJoël Godin  
Darrell Samson

STAFF

Gabrielle de Billy Brown

**TRANSPORTATION**

\$22,645.21

**ACCOMMODATION**

\$2,997.48

**HOSPITALITY**

\$0.00

**PER DIEMS**

\$1,422.28

**MISCELLANEOUS**

\$98.50

**TOTAL****\$27,163.47**