

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

Meeting of the APF Education, Culture and Communication Committee and the Parliamentary Network on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Bucharest, Romania

April 3 to 5, 2024

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (CAPF), which attended meetings of the APF Education, Culture and Communication Committee (the Committee) and the Parliamentary Network on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Network) held in Bucharest, Romania, from April 3 to 5, 2024, has the honour to present its report.

The delegation was composed of **Bernard Généreux**, MP and head of the delegation, and **Darrell Samson**, MP and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF. They were accompanied by Dominique Montpetit, Advisor to the Canadian Branch of the APF.

Parliamentarians from 13 APF branches attended the Committee and Network meetings. The APF's four regions, Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia, were represented.

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

The Canadian Branch delegation took part in the committee's work on April 3–4, 2024. The Committee studies issues relating to cultural expression in French, education, training, communication and information technology. The meeting was chaired by Laurent Wehrli (National Advisor, Switzerland).

Sorin Mihai Cîmpeanu (Senator, vice-president of the Senate of Romania and Chair of the Romanian Branch of the APF) began the committee meeting by welcoming the participants. He recounted the history of Romania's involvement in the Francophonie and emphasized how proud the country is of being part of the Francophonie.

The committee's work started with adopting the agenda, the minutes and the record of decisions from the previous meeting and the report on the committee's activities since the last meeting. The members also followed up on two of its in-progress draft reports, namely:

- the report on the *United Nations Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* by Jennifer Maccarone (MNA, Quebec);
- the draft report on inclusive education, also presented by Jennifer Maccarone (MNA, Quebec). On that point, MNA Jennifer Maccarone reminded the APF branches that Quebec is seeking examples of inclusive education projects implemented in the Francophonie before the next committee meeting; and
- the report on looted goods during colonization, presented by the Swiss Branch.

During the first day of work, committee members heard from the following experts:

- Slim Khalbous (Rector of the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)) on the AUF, a transformed organization and prospects for collaboration.
 - During the question period, **Bernard Généreux** asked Mr. Khalbous whether the AUF had projects involving entrepreneurship. He answered that the AUF had some projects in this field and that it works with private companies in this respect.

- Éric Poppe (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) representative for Central and Eastern Europe) on the OIF's educational and cultural activities and its new four-year program;
- Emmanuel Regonessa (consultant, Association internationale des maires francophones) for an overview of municipal issues and initiatives to fight disinformation; and
- Bertrand Levant (program specialist, project lead, OIF) on the OIF's initiatives to fight information disorder.

The first day of work ended with a round table discussion on disinformation. **Bernard Génèreux** spoke about the latest Canadian efforts on this topic. He shared the following information:

- Disinformation and misinformation are issues that, while far from new, have become much more widespread in recent years. Emerging artificial intelligence platforms are speeding up this process, as it is now possible to mimic a person's image or voice to make them say anything.
- In a [recent survey](#), Statistics Canada reported that, in 2023, 59% of Canadians were very or extremely concerned about any type of misinformation online and 43% of Canadians felt it was getting harder to decipher online truth from fiction.
- These figures are particularly worrying in an election scenario, as the possibilities for election-related disinformation are endless and can undermine the integrity of democratic processes. If constituents are to maintain trust in their institutions and representatives, action is needed to expose disinformation campaigns targeting electoral processes, elected officials and candidates.
- Canada and the Netherlands jointly issued the [Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#) last September. Supported by 34 countries, the declaration calls on participating states to take active steps to avoid participating in disinformation campaigns and to condemn any such acts and to refrain from restricting freedom of expression under the guise of countering disinformation.
- The [ElectoFacts](#) platform, which compiles some of the most prevalent misconceptions about the electoral process and provides the facts.
- The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology is currently studying Bill C-27 enacting the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act. Artificial intelligence is one of the greatest risks to parliamentary life. It is vital to take steps to regulate its use and ensure the operability of the acts so as to take concerted action.

The second day of work was a chance for parliamentarians to learn more about the status of French in Romania. To this end, the network heard from:

- Sorin Mihai Cimpeanu (vice-president of the Senate of Romania and chair of the Romanian Branch of the APF) on strategically choosing French and reforming basic education.

- Simona Bucura-Oprescu (Minister for Labour and Social Solidarity of Romania) on the labour market in European Union member countries and its realities and perspectives.
- Sergiu Nistor (personal representative of the Romanian Prime Minister to the Conseil permanent de la Francophonie) on education and democratic citizenship in Romania's francophone community;
- Mihnea Costoiu (Rector, National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest and former Deputy Minister of the Ministry of National Education) on society's digital transformation in the Francophonie; and
- Norina Consuela Forna (Chair, Conférence internationale de Doyens et des Facultés de Chirurgie dentaire d'Expression française) on success in French postgraduate medical and dentistry studies in Romania.

Parliamentarians in attendance also heard a presentation from Sahoua Antoine Gully (Member of Parliament, Côte d'Ivoire) on the work of the school and national languages program in Côte d'Ivoire. This program is aimed at introducing, developing and expanding bilingual education (African languages and French).

Cynthia Eid, President, Fédération internationale des professeurs de français (FIPF), then gave a presentation about the next generation of teachers worldwide, teacher shortages and school dropout. After the presentation, **Darrell Samson** underscored the Government of Canada's responsibility in helping develop solutions to address the shortage of francophone teachers. In particular, he asked Ms. Eid whether there were any existing projects or discussions between Canada and the FIPF. Ms. Eid said that there was a shortage of nearly 5 million teachers in North America, partly due to the profession's lack of appeal. She added that the FIPF will be in Canada soon to discuss ways of improving the appeal of the teaching field.

Committee members also approved the APF's membership to the Réseau francophone international en conseil scientifique (**Bernard Généreux** spoke to state the Branch's support for this membership) and the partnership agreement with the FIPF.

Parliamentarians discussed possible future topics for the committee's work before ending the meeting. **Bernard Généreux** said that it could be worthwhile for the committee to hear from artificial intelligence experts at the next committee meeting scheduled for July 2024 in Montreal, Canada.

PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON HIV/AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the APF branch took part in the network's work on April 5, 2024. The network is a space for discussion and a place for raising awareness and promoting action to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The meeting was chaired by Laurent Wehrli (National Advisor, Switzerland).

Following the opening of the meeting, the network approved the agenda, the minutes and the record of decisions from the previous meeting as well as the network's activity report. A round table discussion followed, during which participants shared the latest

developments in the fight against the three diseases in their territories. **Darrell Samson** began the round table. He shared the following information:

- In 2022, 1,833 new cases of HIV infection were reported in Canada, a 25% increase over 2021. Despite this increase, the number of new diagnoses remains comparable to those reported prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that this significant spike in new HIV diagnoses is due to fewer tests during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- According to the most recent projections, the 90-90-90 targets have not been fully met in Canada. The second target was not reached but the other two were surpassed.
- In 2022, Health Canada approved lenacapavir, a [drug](#) developed by Gilead Sciences. It is the first capsid inhibitor approved in Canada and was developed to treat certain forms of multi-drug-resistant HIV.
- In August 2022, the [Government of Canada](#) announced that it would invest in the “distribution of HIV self-testing kits and other methods of HIV testing that will improve access for populations most affected by HIV.”
- In September 2022, the [Government of Canada](#) announced that it would commit \$1.21 billion in financial support to the Global Fund. The announcement was made at the Global Fund’s Seventh Replenishment pledging conference. This is a 30% increase over the previous pledge.

Canada, like many other countries around the world, reported an upsurge of measles compared to 2023. Many cases were reported this winter. Measles can be prevented through vaccination but vaccination rates in some parts of the country are low. Only 79% of seven year old [children](#) in Canada have received two doses of the vaccine preventing this disease. Public health authorities are running targeted vaccination campaigns in the most affected areas.

Delegates from the following APF branches also contributed to the round table discussion: Quebec, France, Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Romania, Luxembourg, Benin, Cambodia and Switzerland.

During its meeting, the network heard from a number of experts from international organizations:

- Françoise Vanni (Head of External Relations and Communications, Global Fund) on the impact of Global Fund’s programs, focusing on francophone countries and countries with challenging environments;
- Dr. Jean-Élie Malkin (international medical expert) on a range of health issues in the Francophonie;
- Béchir N’Daw (Senior Advisor, Political Partnerships, External and Donator Relations, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) on challenges to end AIDS by 2030; and
- Pascale Vanneaux (Special Advisor, Medicrime Guinea) on the fight against counterfeit and fake medicines and public health and domestic security issues.

These hearings informed parliamentarians on the work of international organizations fighting the three diseases and provided an opportunity to discuss priority health issues in the Francophonie.

The meeting was also an opportunity for the parliamentarians to learn more about the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections in Romania. The network heard from:

- Dr. Raluca Elena Pătrascu (infectious disease physician, coordinator, HIV/AIDS department, Romania Ministry of Health) about the status of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in Romania and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Daniela Călugaru (inspector, pre-university education, Ministry of Education, Romania) and Dr. Raluca Elena Pătrascu on health education, Romanian programs and the challenges they overcame.

Following the hearings, the network decided to work on issues related to counterfeit and fake medicine and health education at the upcoming meetings of the committee (July 2024) and the network (fall 2024).

OTHER SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

On April 3, 2024, the Canadian delegation met with a representative of the Embassy of Canada to Romania to discuss bilateral relations between Canada and Romania and the Francophonie in Romania. On April 4, 2024, participants attending the two APF meetings visited the [Maison de la Francophonie](#) in Bucharest, a university residence that opened its doors in October 2023. The Maison de la Francophonie is on the Polytechnic University campus in Bucharest. It is the second residence of its kind in the world after the one in Paris. It gives francophone students and researchers a place for living and academic and cultural exchange. There are nearly 300 rooms as well as event and co-working spaces.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, MP

Chair, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION

Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

ACTIVITY

APF Education, Culture and Communication Committee and the Parliamentary Network on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

DESTINATION Bucharest, Romania

DATES April 3 to 5, 2024

DELEGATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS Bernard Généreux
Darrell Samson

STAFF Dominique Montpetit

TRANSPORTATION \$21,661.63

ACCOMMODATION \$2,870.22

HOSPITALITY \$0.00

PER DIEMS \$1,331.64

OFFICIAL GIFTS \$21.61

MISCELLANEOUS \$101.00

TOTAL **\$25,986.10**