



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs
Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie* (APF)**

**Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie* (APF)**

**Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
March 24 to 26, 2017**

Report

The Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) held at the United Nations Headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, from March 24 to 26, 2017, has the honour to present its report. The delegation consisted of **Robert Aubin**, MP and member of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Branch, and **Jean-François Lafleur**, the Branch's Executive Secretary.

Some forty parliamentarians from the four regions of the francophone world took part in this meeting. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were represented at the meeting: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, France, Hungary, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo and Vietnam.

Address by the Chair of the Committee

Robert Aubin, Member (Canada) and Chair of the Committee, welcomed the attendees and opened the proceedings. The Assembly adopted the agenda, minutes and record of decisions from the meeting held in Quebec City, Canada, on February 1, 2017, during the APF Bureau meeting.

The Chair invited members of the branches represented at the meeting to go around the table and briefly introduce themselves.

Presentation by Eric-Normand Thibeault, *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*

The parliamentarians then heard **Eric-Normand Thibeault, Director of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)*'s Asia-Pacific Regional Office**, who presented the OIF's main principles as a collective stakeholder in La Francophonie, and the structures through which it operates at both the state and government levels. He described the four main structures, namely, the Francophone Summit, ministerial conferences, the Permanent Council of La Francophonie and the Secretary General of La Francophonie.

Mr. Thibeault also described for the members of the Committee the relationship between the OIF and the different APF branches, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. He explained the role of the APF, in collaboration with the OIF, as a consultative body to La Francophonie at several levels, particularly with respect to legislative matters relating to language; and the promotion, development and use of French as a language of work in the public and private sectors.

Presentation and review of draft reports

Bicameralism in francophone countries

Claudine Lepage, Senator (France) and Vice-Chair of the Committee, presented a partial report on **bicameralism in francophone countries**. The purpose of the report was to expand on a report submitted in 2004 on the “functioning of a bicameral parliament.” This report to the Commission states that a second chamber is being established in some countries, while other countries are considered abolishing it.

Following the presentation of the report, several members discussed the current situation in their respective legislatures. A few participants, including **Fathi Derder** (Switzerland) and **Pierre Flambeau Ngayap**, Senator (Cameroon) suggested that a Senate cannot be effective in a bicameral legislature unless it is given sufficient power to meaningfully exercise its duties. Without this power, they consider this chamber to be of limited use. Others have stated that in bicameral parliaments, in the case of existing structures, it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to make changes to the structure of the Senate alone.

The Committee nonetheless agreed that this matter deserves ongoing scrutiny, and urged members to continue collecting data to support its findings.

Data protection authorities in francophone countries

On behalf of the Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire Branch, **Robert Aubin**, Member (Canada) and Chair of the Committee, presented a report on **data protection authorities in francophone countries**. This report described the legal frameworks that exist in certain APF countries for the protection of data, their data protection authorities and the expectations of francophone countries with regard to the protection of personal information.

Fathi Derder, Member (Switzerland) said that the Committee should also address the question of how to protect data and not merely enumerate the tools available to francophone countries. He also expressed concern about the proliferation of sources of personal information and the limited resources for monitoring this information and its potential uses. It is important to ensure security as regard access to data. We have a right to know where data that belongs to us is going and how it is being protected. The data that we disseminate must reflect the principle of data portability, that is, it must follow us seamlessly (e.g., when we change doctors). The question at the heart of this debate is how to gain the public's trust in terms of what is being done with their personal information.

There was consensus to extend the report. The OIF representative, **Caroline Nockerman**, agreed and expressed a desire to continue refining the legal framework for data protection. Fathi Derder, Member (Switzerland), welcomed the OIF's commitment.

Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, Senator (Cameroon), however, was of the opinion that the Committee should reformulate the theme and title of the report.

Fathi Derder, Member (Switzerland) would like the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee to draw up a comparative profile of how the parliaments of francophone countries operate.

The Committee Chair, **Robert Aubin** (Canada), said that members wishing to pursue the report would have to first consult the authors and would also have to stay within the Committee's terms of reference.

Ethicists and codes of ethics in francophone countries

Jean Habel, Member (Quebec) presented the report. **Chea Cheth**, Senator (Cambodia) told the Committee that Cambodia had established a working group to draft a code of ethics for its Senate. Cambodia's bicameral parliament does not yet have a code as such, but members of the lower house have a collegiate body responsible for these matters. **Patrick Muyaya**, Member (DRC) stated that the Democratic Republic of Congo has a highly effective all-female Council of Sages that acts as a deterrent. In Laos, the general elections have given rise to many changes in institutional bodies.

Pierre-Flambeau Ngayap, Senator, said that the issue has not had much attention in Cameroon. Nonetheless, there are a number of safeguards against misconduct. The Vietnamese delegation thought the concept of creating a network of ethicists across francophone countries was interesting.

Lastly, everyone agreed that those who perform the duties of ethics officers must be role models who are beyond reproach.

Undocumented children

Claudine Lepage, Senator (France), presented a follow-up report on the registration of births, in which she noted the lack of data in certain member countries. The OIF wants to hold a meeting on this issue in the fall.

Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, Senator (Cameroon), commented that some countries were lagging because of their difficult political situation. He hoped that the branches would respond in large numbers. A number of African countries are in crisis, which explains a delay in responding to the report's questionnaire. In Vietnam, there is no major concern in this regard. Laws and measures have been implemented to address the issue of undocumented children. A symposium on issues pertaining to marital status will be held in Paris in autumn 2017.

Parliamentary cooperation programs

Electoral missions in francophone countries

Caroline Nockerman, (OIF) reiterated her organization's commitment to supporting electoral processes. The OIF intervenes beforehand in order to ensure a legal and institutional framework that is in keeping with international standards for free and transparent elections. In addition, the organization creates conditions to ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders in the electoral process. It also ensures that electoral processes are observed by parliamentarians, albeit in small numbers for logistical and financial reasons.

One senator questioned the priority given to legislative elections over presidential elections. According to that senator, there is a higher risk of conflicts during presidential

elections. It was also pointed out that it has been quite a while since a parliamentary observation mission has taken place. This is partly because parliamentarians are informed of these missions at the very last minute. Quite often, there is not enough time to prepare and it is therefore not possible to participate.

Noria program

Robert Aubin (Canada) noted that the now 15-year-old Noria program was designed to strengthen the digital capabilities of francophone parliaments in the southern hemisphere through the transfer of knowledge and skills in a parliamentary framework. The program focusses on three themes: the modernization of information systems, the promotion of La Francophonie, and training sessions and workshops. The Noria program has made significant advances and has evolved over the years.

Didier LeBot (APF) said that the program would be audited, in collaboration with the OIF, in response to a request expressed in particular by the Africa region. Funding for the programs activities has decreased and it makes sense to want to ensure the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of spending under the Noria program. The audit will aim, among other things, to assess the relevance of the program's objectives and management, and to provide a self-assessment tool. An international consultation has taken place and an auditor will be appointed shortly. This cost will be shared equally by the APF and the OIF. The auditor will have three months from the date he is hired to report his findings.

Members heard that several countries have benefited from the program, including Madagascar, which has made progress in modernizing its computer system, and Mali, which received assistance at a very crucial time to provide training to its personnel, as well as computer equipment for its library. Mali expressed a desire to take further advantage of the program to address new needs and objectives for the modernization of its equipment.

Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, Senator (Cameroon), welcomed the support provided to the branches in question but hoped to obtain more information on the program in order to gain a better understanding of its full scope, the financial implications for the organizations funding it and the efficiency of the program. Certain cost overruns that occurred in the past should be justified, even though their intentions are not being called into question.

The Committee members then discussed cost management, the budget breakdown and how to identify budget items, including how to clarify them.

Parliamentary seminars and training sessions

The usefulness of the seminars and sessions was acknowledged, and Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, Senator (Cameroon) expressed a desire to continue this program while taking good care of our speakers.

Geoffrey-Dieudonné Award

The members were pleased to announce the creation of this award, which includes a one-week internship in a francophone parliament of the winner's choice, to be approved by the host parliament and paid for by the APF. One of the members of the Committee proposed that anyone working with the APF be eligible, not just those working in a southern hemisphere parliament and that, if possible, the winner also be given a memento as a reminder of the award.

Multilateral programs for francophone parliamentary development

Robert Aubin (Canada), Chair of the Committee, said that the branches from two countries emerging from crises, namely Madagascar and Mali, had been selected for this program. The Committee was informed of the programs' progress.

Francophone Youth Parliament and national youth parliaments

Josué Mbadinga (Gabon), Vice-Chair of the Committee, informed the members of the progress made in establishing the Francophone Youth Parliament. He thanked the participating branches and explained the functioning of the Youth Parliament, which would be based on functional structure of the APF. Any documents adopted will be submitted to the committees, the plenary and, finally, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of La Francophonie. Debates will also be organized for the ordinary session to be held in Luxembourg in July. Branches will be advised of the agenda ahead of time so that they can properly prepare young people for these events.

Young Francophone Parliamentarians program

Robert Aubin (Canada), Chair of the Committee, spoke again of the establishment of this program to help young francophone parliamentarians carry out their parliamentary functions. **Bruno Lefebvre**, Member (Belgium/Francophone Community/Wallonia-Brussels), reported on the recent activities of the young parliamentarians, including their visit to Cambodia, and reiterated his group's desire to be an integral part of the structure of the APF as a recognized entity.

Several parliamentarians had questions about what the mandate of this network would be, and about the definition of "young parliamentarian" (maximum age). The response was that a young parliamentarian is someone under 40 years of age with less than 10 years of parliamentary experience. The goal is to establish ties and networking opportunities with young parliamentarians from other international organizations. It was also noted that there is a discrepancy between being the age at which one is old enough to vote and the age at which one can be elected to office. This should not be the case. Lastly, Committee member **Pierre Flambeau Ngayap**, Senator (Cameroon), suggested that the voting age should be determined by an international statute.

Update on the APF strategic framework

Study on the needs of francophone parliaments in terms of comparative law

Pierre-Flambeau Ngayap, Senator (Cameroon), presented a study proposal and asked whether other parliamentarians were interested in knowing what is happening in foreign parliaments in terms of parliamentary law. The appropriateness of moving forward with a study on the subject was discussed, given that a similar study had already been carried out. The Committee wanted to go into greater detail in disseminating information on existing comparative law studies. It was suggested that a survey questionnaire be prepared in order to ascertain the branches' interest in this topic.

Update on resolutions

Robert Aubin (Canada), Chair of the Committee, asked the branches to inform him of the measures taken as follow-up on the two resolutions adopted by the Committee on national human rights institutions in francophone countries and the political participation of youth in francophone countries.

The next meeting will take place in Luxembourg on July 9, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, M.P.
President of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of Political Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
DATES	March 24–26, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Robert Aubin
STAFF	Jean-François Lafleur
TRANSPORTATION	\$13,517.17
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,702.28
PER DIEMS	\$1,167.44
MISCELLANEOUS	\$25.99
TOTAL	\$16,412.88