



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation Respecting
its participation in the Meeting of the Education,
Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the
*Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)***

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

**Cotonou, Benin
May 3 and 4, 2017**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) that took part in the meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee held in Cotonou, Benin, on May 3 and 4, 2017, is honoured to present its report.

The delegation consisted of **Marc Serré**, MP, accompanied by Jean-François Lafleur, Association Secretary for the Canadian Branch.

Besides the Canadian Branch, the following branches were in attendance: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, France, Mali, Senegal, Switzerland and Togo.

The opening ceremony began with a speech from **Didier Berberat**, State Councillor (Switzerland) and Chair of the APF's Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee. This was followed by a speech from the President of the Beninese Branch, **Adrien Hounghédji**, who is also Speaker of Benin's National Assembly.

The members of the Committee being present, the Committee unanimously adopted the agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting, held in Madagascar in July 2016.

Prevention of violent extremism and radicalization

Senator **Christian Levrat** (Switzerland) presented a report on the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. The report is oriented around the strategy the UN adopted to address these issues in 2006. It provides an action plan to strengthen intergovernmental dialogue in order to further the battle against these two problems through domestic and international action. The plan also suggests an educational component to foster better understanding of cultures, an idea supported by the Member from **Cameroon**.

According to the **Swiss** Senator, security on social networks needs to be strengthened and people need to be informed about how to use them. Gender inequality must be combatted, particularly by enhancing measures to prevent violence against women. Positive actions to integrate foreign communities are also necessary. The Senator submitted four potential actions: establish a dialogue among religions, rebalance spending, strengthen gender equality and continue deradicalization.

A Member from **Mali** stated that, in her country, a network has formed to combat violent extremism. One of the network's strategies is to promote inter-generational dialogue. On this point, a Member from **Burkina Faso** encouraged this type of dialogue on gender equality. He argued that a new domination of one gender over the other must be avoided.

In addition, Senator **Philippe Mouiller** (France) argued that immigrants must be supported. A message of integration must continue to be sent in order to eradicate this extremism.

A Member from Benin pointed out that people should never feel excluded. He explained, for example, that foreign credential recognition can be a tool for inclusion, but that rejecting such credentials can lead people to feel excluded and possibly find meaning in radicalization.

Senghor-Césaire award

Didier Berberat, State Councillor (Switzerland) and Chair of the Committee presented the proposed changes to the Senghor–Césaire award. The goals of the changes include obtaining more stable funding for the award, making the jury more diverse and enabling branches to nominate more than one candidate.

Commodification of education

Senator **Philippe Mouiller** (France) presented the Committee with a report on the commodification of education in which he emphasized the underfunding of public infrastructure. More educational services are needed and must correspond to funding needs. These services must be relevant and to some extent address labour market requirements. Private provision of education must not reduce its quality. Finally, the quality of programs and training provided must be appropriate and subject to monitoring. The overall system must be supervised by an oversight body.

A Member from **Cameroon** said that she believes the language in which this training is provided needs to be a concern. English is sometimes used in the Francophonie, and this problem should be resolved. English textbooks are also sometimes used. A Member from **Burkina Faso** noted that, while admissions to post-secondary programs are high, graduation rates are sometimes low. The quality of teaching must not be ignored. A common baseline for the quality and content of educational services must be established.

Civic education

On behalf of the rapporteur from the Quebec Branch, a member from **Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation** presented a report on civic education. The report explained how to fight radicalization by adding a program to school curricula that raises awareness about radicalization among youth. It also provided examples from across the Francophonie.

Association des professeurs de français du Bénin

The Committee heard from the Association des professeurs de français du Bénin (APFB), the country's French teachers' group, which reported on the status of teachers in the country. The APFB outlined its teaching programs and the values that guide them, such as the teaching of religious values and respect for the rights of women and children.

In addition, the APFB described its numerous initiatives to develop creativity, spark interest in the arts and culture in general, raise awareness among students about the rights of women and children, and combat religious extremism.

The Committee members welcomed the APFB's ideas but lamented the lack of resources available to carry out its projects. They wondered how the APF and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) could support these initiatives. A Member from **Togo** asked whether it would be possible, for the sake of efficiency, to focus on one or two projects and support them from start to finish rather than take on multiple projects. In addition, a Member from **Benin** asked whether linking the projects with private interests would provide better funding.

Finally, the APFB expressed the hope that their initiatives would become part of a standardized education program in **Benin**, supported by the Beninese government.

Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation

The Committee heard from **Emile Tanawa**, Director of the Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation (IFEF), an education and training institute for the Francophonie. He set out the unifying role the IFEF plays in education and training, particularly by providing technical expertise to develop, monitor and assess the education policies of OIF member countries.

Mr. **Tanawa** also explained that, through a number of international initiatives, the IFEF is trying to ensure fair, inclusive and high-quality training is available; foster innovation in teaching technologies by connecting their clients; democratize access to teaching resources through orientation and information sessions; and take action on youth training and labour force participation, all while strengthening French-language training.

A Member from **Burkina Faso** expressed a desire for all the francophone countries in Africa to have the same resources and basic infrastructure to deliver their education programs and, above all, that they respect their different socio-cultural realities while avoiding indoctrination. The Member from **Mali** further emphasized that much needs to be done to publicize and raise awareness about these programs. She said that there is a shortage of properly credentialed teachers and instructors. The profession needs investment, legislation and regulation. The IFEF supports this solution.

Lastly, the Committee members agreed to conclude that action on the working conditions and work tools of teachers is required.

Round table on demographic trends in francophone Africa, related issues and implications for education funding

Armand Philippe Tobossi, a demographer and official with the population dynamics program (UNFPA), **Lydienne Epoube**, Member (Cameroon) and Chair of the APF's Network of Women Parliamentarians, and **Emile Tanawa**, Director of the IFEF, presented these trends to the Committee members.

Like the Committee members, they reported that the strong population growth among francophones in Africa and the consequent declining average age (47% are under 15 in Africa) are quickly driving up general education needs. There are shortages of teaching staff, classrooms, teaching materials, supports and general school infrastructure.

All of these needs entail costs, and financial resources are already seriously lacking. The private sector is filling some of the gap, and more and more services are being provided. However, the problem of teaching quality, and therefore the quality of graduates, is a serious one.

In this socio-economic context, the IFEF believes the major challenge is to ensure this demographic surge is met with economic growth and the implementation of an appropriate income distribution and social solidarity policy.

Furthermore, the IFEF argues that action is needed to increase human capital. Access to education, health care, hygiene and family planning must be improved while focusing on increasing the potential of women in Africa. A Member from Cameroon agreed. She noted how important it is for women to be able to decide for themselves when it comes to health and reproduction, and to have easy access to these services. To accomplish this, major changes in socio-cultural practices are needed.

Other business

The Committee adopted a resolution on the commodification of education. It also adopted a resolution from the Francophone Youth Parliament entitled "Study in French" and a final joint resolution with the Network of Women Parliamentarians concerning sexual and reproductive rights.

The Committee would like to pursue its study of the issues discussed in the round table on demographic trends in francophone Africa, related issues and implications for education funding.

Finally, the Committee expressed a desire to hold a discussion on copyright in Africa. It will meet on July 9, 2017, in Luxembourg.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, MP
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 the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the APF
DESTINATION	Cotonou, Benin
DATES	May 3 and 4, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Marc Serré
STAFF	Mr. Jean-François Lafleur
TRANSPORTATION	\$12,678.62
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,487.02
PER DIEMS	\$645.96
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$74.60
MISCELLANEOUS	\$99.72
TOTAL	\$14,985.92