



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

**Parliamentary Seminar on Parliamentary Oversight and
Public Policy Evaluation**

Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

From November 14 to 15, 2019

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)* is honoured to present its report on its participation in a parliamentary seminar on parliamentary oversight and public policy assessment. The seminar took place in Brazzaville, Congo, on November 14 and 15, 2019.

This parliamentary seminar was hosted as part of a series of APF parliamentary cooperation activities. The Honourable Eric Forest, Senator and Vice-chair of the Canadian Branch, was invited by the APF as a guest speaker.

Approximately thirty Congolese parliamentarians and parliamentary officials benefited from this activity.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

The meeting opened in the presence of Mr. Isidore Mvouba, President of the National Assembly of Congo, and Mr. Pierre Ngolo, President of the Senate of the Republic of Congo, who read a message by Mr. Jacques Krabal, Member of the National Assembly (France) and APF Parliamentary Secretary General, welcoming the participants and wishing them tremendous success at the seminar.

Mr. Ngolo then presented the topics of the seminar and the different speakers and subjects planned for the next two days.

Senator Forest (Canada) discussed notably:

- the uniqueness of Canadian bicameral parliamentary evaluation; and
- other parliamentary procedures for evaluating public policy.

THE UNIQUENESS OF CANADIAN BICAMERAL PARLIAMENTARY EVALUATION

Senator Forest talked about how the Canadian Parliament evaluates public policy and described the role of each of the two Houses of Parliament in the Canadian legislative process.

He gave a brief overview of the Canadian legislative process, noting that government bills can be introduced in either the Senate or the House of Commons, adding that bills containing tax measures or involving public expenditures must be introduced in the House of Commons. All government bills must be considered and adopted by both Houses of Parliament.

He outlined the different stages of the legislative process, which are generally the same in both Houses, but said that the vast majority of bills are introduced in the House of Commons.

The role of the Senate is to provide an objective second assessment of legislation adopted by the House. In short, the Senate's work dovetails that of the House of

Commons. Sen. Forest also spoke about Senators' power to amend legislation and about communication.

Sen. Forest also outlined the organizations that help Canadian parliamentarians in their work, including the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, the Library of Parliament and the Department of Justice.

Sen. Forest described the study of Bill C-45, the cannabis legalization legislation, as an example of how parliamentarians evaluate and review public policy proposals and how the various stages of the Canadian legislative process were carried out to adopt this public policy.

In his presentation to parliamentarians and officials from the Republic of Congo, he also talked about how certain bills, including budget implementation bills, are first and foremost introduced in the House. He described the complexity of studying these bills and the balance between the relatively quick adoption of these initiatives for the benefit of Canadians (e.g., social assistance programs) and the need for parliamentary scrutiny and accountability as mechanisms of oversight.

OTHER PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING PUBLIC POLICY

Sen. Forest also outlined some of Canada's other parliamentary evaluation procedures. He spoke about the role of parliamentary committees and of certain Officers of Parliament.

He emphasized the key role of parliamentary committees in evaluating public policy. Committees study not only bills that are introduced in Parliament, but also current programs and initiatives or any other subject of interest, in addition to government estimates.

A. Parliamentary committee studies on subjects of interest

Sen. Forest informed the audience that studies on topics of interest usually begin when a committee receives a mandate to do so from the Senate or the House of Commons, but that they can also undertake a study on their own as long as the topic falls within their mandate.

For example, he described for those present how the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance studied the design and implementation of the federal government's infrastructure funding program.

He concluded by giving the highlights of the study, which led to 27 meetings, appearances from more than 50 witnesses and a dozen recommendations to the federal government. He added that the government could respond to the committee's recommendations, which resulted in some program changes as a result of its work.

B. Review of estimates

Sen. Forest moved on to the second aspect of his presentation, which dealt with the review of the government's annual expenditures. He outlined the distinctions between Senate and House of Commons committees in this regard, including:

- In the Senate, all appropriations under consideration are sent to the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance;
- House of Commons committees receive their respective departmental appropriations;
- Unlike Senate Committees, House Committees can approve, reduce or reject appropriations referred to them; and
- Senate Committees usually provide comments to the government after it finishes studies even though they are not required to.

For the benefit of his Congolese audience, he also mentioned the important roles of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General of Canada as non-partisan officials in the parliamentary evaluation of public policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, M.P.

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary seminar on Parliamentary Oversight and Public Policy Evaluation
DESTINATION	Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
DATES	From November 14 to 15, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. Eric Forest
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 364.60
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 139.70
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 74.14
TOTAL	\$ 578.41