

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 Bureau of the Assemblée parlementaire de la  
Francophonie**

**Papeete, French Polynesia, France**

**From January 28 to February 2, 2023**

## Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that participated in the meeting of the Bureau of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) in Papeete, French Polynesia, from January 28 to February 2, 2023, has the honour of presenting its report.

The Canadian delegation was composed of **Francis Drouin**, M.P., President of the APF and Chair of the Canadian Branch, **Joël Godin**, M.P. and Chair of the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee, and **René Villemure**, M.P. and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch. Julie Pelletier accompanied the delegation as the Administrative Secretary of the Branch.

The Bureau brought together about thirty francophone parliamentarians from all five continents. In addition to the Canadian Branch, parliamentarians from the French Community of Belgium, Benin, Gabon, France, Luxembourg, New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec, Switzerland, Vietnam and New Caledonia, as well as a representative of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) took part in the proceedings.

### Commencement of proceedings

The proceedings began with speeches by the President of the Assembly of French Polynesia, Gaston Tong Sang; Édouard Fritch, President of French Polynesia; **Francis Drouin**, President of the APF and Chair of the Canadian Branch; and Éric Spitz, High Commissioner of the Republic in French Polynesia.

### Composition of the Bureau

After adopting the modified agenda and the minutes of the Bureau meeting held in Kigali on July 5, 2022, the participants approved several Bureau appointments, including those of the new vice-chairs Amadou Mame Diop, new President of the National Assembly of Senegal and Chair of the Senegalese Branch, and Nathalie Roy, new President of the National Assembly of Quebec and Chair of the Quebec Branch. Other appointments included Chantal Soucy, Member of the Quebec National Assembly, as President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians; and Stéphane Sarrazin, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as the new chargé de mission for the Americas Region.

The Bureau decided to submit requests to the Political Committee to change the Parliament of Georgia's status from observer to that of an associate member, as well as the request for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to become an observer.

### Parliamentary Secretary General's activity report

The interim Parliamentary Secretary General (PSG), Bruno Fuchs, greeted the audience. He commented on the 47<sup>th</sup> annual session of the APF and reviewed the work done by the various committees and networks that had the chance to meet in person for the first time since the pandemic. Mr. Fuchs also referred to the strengthened relationship between the APF and the OIF and the APF partners. He noted that one of La Francophonie's top priorities, reaching out to young people, was also made possible by resuming the Francophone Youth Parliament, which was held in July 2022, after a five-year break. He reiterated that the Summit of La Francophonie was held four years after the one in

Yerevan. He also referred to the work to revise the APF Constitution, the new strategic framework underway to make the institution's operations more modern and efficient, and finally, the Bodies of Law project to serve as a database for member parliaments interested in legislating on climate change. In conclusion, he expressed the wish to see the APF become more effective and more involved in parliamentary diplomacy, because parliamentarians have the greatest legitimacy to weigh in on the serious issues concerning democracy and the rule of law today.

**René Villemure** congratulated the PSG for the excellent report and asked how the APF intends to assess the actions identified in the report aimed at promoting the use of French in European institutions. **Joël Godin** (Canada) argued that the APF should work on setting smaller and more succinct objectives, focusing on what is most effective. He was also pleased to see that the Bureau seemed to be working toward the same objectives.

The report was adopted with amendments.

### **Climate change legislative corpus**

The PSG recalled that in July 2022 in Kigali, the Bureau decided to create a legislative corpus to support francophone parliaments in passing legislation, and that a first phase, dealing with climate change, had been launched at a workshop organized in November 2022 by the APF, on the margins of the 27th Conference of the Parties on Climate change in Sharm el-Sheikh.

With financial support from the OIF and technical support from its Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable (IFDD), the APF recruited Stéphanie Reiche-de Vigan, an instructor-researcher in comparative international law, specialized in sustainable development. Ms. Reiche-de Vigan produced a report in two parts: first, a status report on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and its recommendations; and second, 42 fact sheets listing all relevant climate legislation, policies and tools by francophone countries, in addition to a similar fact sheet regarding Kenya.

Mr. **Villemure** (Canada) echoed the comments of Laurent Wehrli (Switzerland) and Stéphane Sarrazin (Ontario) that under federal systems such as Canada, environment is an area of shared jurisdiction with the provinces. Since the report does not include provincial laws, the country profiles are therefore incomplete.

The Bureau took note of the document submitted and mandated the General Secretariat to format it in such a way that it could be used by the parliamentary branches.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Mars Di Bartolomeo (Luxembourg), Treasurer, reported on the APF's sound financial situation for the year ending December 31, 2022.

Chantal Soucy (Quebec) expressed disappointment about the decrease in OIF funding. She suggested that mission costs be more detailed and that the Angola file be reviewed before approving it. On the subject of funding for good offices missions, she said that it was worthwhile having a better idea of the number of activities and participants taking part in them and that there needs to be better guidance for the process surrounding the

choice of activities, in particular by clearly communicating the objectives to the Bureau, ensuring that these missions are consistent with the Strategic Framework, and reviewing the post-activity results.

Philippe de Mouiller (France) called for the reorientation of APF's financial capacity and recommended making choices that are more limited and more in line with defined priorities.

**Joël Godin** (Canada) asked the treasurer for details on the existing balance of the Special Response Fund for Haiti, which does not appear in the proposed budget; the amounts concerning the Parliamentary Cooperation Support Fund; the budgetary item "various actions" and its actual purpose; and the proposal to increase dues in line with inflation.

Gaston Tong Sang (French Polynesia) asked how the APF would address the issue of dues in arrears.

The PSG concluded the discussion by reiterating the desire for the APF to improve efficiency and control over its expenditures.

In particular, the Bureau approved:

- the closing of the accounts for the financial year ending December 31, 2022;
- the adoption of the Treasurer's report and the 2023 budget, provided that the General Secretariat examines the appropriateness of its participation in each international meeting; each mission meets a specific objective and a report on the outcomes is prepared; and furthermore, any mission that does not involve parliamentarians is the exception and requires a detailed request submitted to the Administrative Secretary General and, in case of doubt, requires the express authorization of the Parliamentary Secretary General and the Treasurer;
- the carryover from previous years of €24,998 in order to present a balanced fiscal year for 2023;
- a request to the working group on the revision of the statutes to consider, when developing the financial regulations, the possibility of co-financing the committee meetings;
- funding in the amount of €196,700 for several joint initiatives from the Parliamentary Cooperation Support Fund and strengthening the French language with parliaments; and
- rules for managing dues in arrears from suspended or struggling branches.

### **Discussion of strategic directions**

The PSG discussed the process that led to the development of the policy priorities for the next APF Strategic Framework, including the various upcoming consultation phases and a review on the first consultation phase launched in the fall of 2023, with questionnaires sent to all branches. He proposed extending the time frame for the next Strategic Framework to five years and that the three main pillars of the framework be the use of the French language and its influence; the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and peace; and the Francophonie of tomorrow, which includes gender equality, the promotion of youth, the environment, education, access to the labour market, etc.

**René Villemure** (Canada) noted that building trust in the institution would also be an important objective.

Chantal Soucy (Quebec) suggested that clear targets be included as indicators to better measure the achievement of the objectives of the future framework. She also suggested adding a cross-cutting approach using gender-based analysis.

Christophe-André Frassa (France) and Laurent Wehrli (Switzerland) both expressed the wish that the work of the committees and networks be consistent with the strategic framework.

### **Political debate**

The President of the APF, **Francis Drouin** (Canada), opened the discussion by explaining the desire of the permanent delegation to address a frequently raised concern that Bureau meetings should take a more political tone by introducing substantive debate. After the theme of the debate “APF doctrine and methodology for responding to crisis situations in the francophone community” was presented via video conference by Moustapha Niasse, former president of the National Assembly of Senegal and former minister of foreign affairs of Senegal, members began the discussion.

**René Villemure** (Canada) pointed out Mr. Niasse’s intervention and stated that the APF should determine the range of possibilities, which will allow to intervene more quickly and effectively.

Chantal Soucy (Quebec) said that the APF and the branches must do more to include women parliamentarians in the composition of delegations.

Boniface Yehouetome (Benin) stressed the importance of going to the real sources of information and not forgetting that the role of the APF is one of mediation.

Laurent Werhli (Switzerland) pointed out that the APF should first define a framework by specifying what it means by the expression “crisis in the Francophone space”, in order to provide as much guidance as possible for APF initiatives.

The Bureau decided to instruct the permanent delegation to adopt a policy and approaches for responding to crisis situations in the francophone community. Presentation of the results is scheduled for the next Bureau meeting in July 2023.

### **Working Group on the revision of the APF Constitution**

Christophe-André Frassa (France), Chair of the Political Committee, provided some background for the reform project launched at the Dakar bureau in 2020, which materialized as a Working Group under the Political Committee. He said that the mandate of the Working Group is to revise two existing texts: the Statutes and the democratic oversight mechanisms, and to draft two regulations, one financial and one internal. Senator Frassa then proposed to the Bureau members the version of the Statutes adopted by the Working Group members in November 2022 and outlined the main changes. He concluded by outlining the next steps, including the desire to adopt the new version of the Statutes at the July 2023 session.

Glen Savoie (New Brunswick) congratulated the APF for giving youth a greater role in its proceedings by proposing to change the composition of the Bureau to include one woman and one young parliamentarian.

Pascal Sawa (New Caledonia) expressed the wish to see the APF add a representative from the Asia-Pacific Region to the executive committee of each of the four committees.

The Chair of the Political Committee, Senator Frassa, proposed amending the proposed version by adding consultation between the president and the delegate general; and the obligation for the committees and networks to ensure that their work themes are in line with the Strategic Framework and in coordination with the General Secretariat.

Mr. **Godin** (Canada) and Jean-Paul Wahl (Belgium/Francophone Community/Wallonia-Brussels) asked that the notion of precedence and the proposed change of position between the delegate general and the 1st vice-chairperson be discussed further.

The Bureau approved the amended draft revision of the Statutes.

### **Hearing of the OIF Administrator**

The delegates heard, via videoconference, the administrator of the OIF, Geoffroi Montpetit, who praised the effective and warm partnership between the OIF and the APF and called for this collaboration to continue.

He then advocated for a more effective Francophonie and stressed that several reforms at the OIF have helped refocus programming and improve the organization's operations. These transformations have paid off and he gave the example of the 99% execution level by December 31, 2022. He also advocated for a Francophonie oriented toward the future, an organization that provides support, is better governed, sustainable and prosperous, prioritizing women, youth, the strengthening of the French language, peace and security.

Mr. Montpetit then returned to the flagship event of the OIF in 2022, the Djerba Summit in Tunisia and the major texts that were adopted, including the Djerba Declaration on digital and the new strategic framework defining the major directions of the institution. He acknowledged the contribution of the APF to the discussions, welcomed the Avis sur le numérique presented by the APF at the Summit and highlighted the recommendations that are directly related to the flagship projects of the OIF. He then invited the APF to implement the report recommendations.

He provided an overview of the OIF's financial support to the APF. He announced that the OIF still aims to support inter-parliamentary cooperation and that it will maintain its subsidy to the APF in 2023 at the same level as 2022. He encouraged the APF to bring forward activities with clear and measurable objectives.

Mars Di Bartolomeo (Luxembourg) asked the OIF to consider raising the threshold on management fees.

President **Drouin** asked for an update on the Jeux de La Francophonie. The administrator stressed the importance of having the Democratic Republic of the Congo host these games and said that the OIF had a duty to support them. He said that there had been real progress in the organization of the games and that the OIF remains confident that the event will be held.

## **Relations with the Association des secrétaires généraux des Parlements francophones**

Siegfried Peters, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Quebec and President of the Association des secrétaires généraux des Parlements francophones (ASGPF), gave an activity report and called on the APF to raise topics that they would like to see the ASGPF focus on.

## **Review of the political situation in the francophone community**

The members of the Bureau examined some of the political situations in the francophone community presented by the Chair of the Political Committee, Christophe-André Frassa. They discussed the parliamentary good offices mission that took place in Cambodia in December 2022. After reviewing the mission report, the Bureau decided to lift the alert on the Cambodian Branch.

The Bureau took note of the de facto suspension of the Haitian Parliament, which, since January 9, officially has no elected representatives. The PSG and **René Villemure** (Canada) emphasized the APF's moral duty to intervene in the situation, pointing out that it was first and foremost the responsibility of the international community, and particularly the UN, to stabilize the situation there in order to create the conditions necessary for elections. Ms. Chantale Soucy (Quebec) and Mr. Pascal Sawa (New Caledonia) also advocated for a long-term solution involving women and youth. **René Villemure** (Canada) stated the importance for the APF to adopt an approach to respond adequately in crisis situations. On motion of the chargé de mission of the Region of the Americas, Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin (Ontario), the Bureau members unanimously adopted an amended statement on the situation in Haiti, expressing their concern and their desire to support efforts to create the conditions necessary to restore the democratic institutions in that country.

## **Adoption of the various reports of the work of the committees and networks**

All the reports of the committees and of the Network of Women Parliamentarians were adopted unanimously. Each body presented an overview of their upcoming activities. The Parliamentary Affairs Committee, among others, through its chair, **Joël Godin** (Canada), reported on the highlights and their work and stressed the importance of the various cooperation programs of the APF.

## **Report of the chargés de mission**

All the reports of the chargés de mission were adopted unanimously.

## **Honours awarded by the APF**

**Joël Godin** (Canada) provided the background behind the creation of the Prix Geoffroi-Dieudonné and acknowledged the presence at the meeting of the 2022 recipient, Ghislain Essabe, a Gabonese public servant.

The 19 nominations from the various branches for the Ordre de la Pléiade were accepted as submitted.

In addition, in response to the request made to the Kigali Bureau by the Council of the Order, which in turn echoed requests reiterated for years, a new Code was proposed in order to restore the prestige of the Ordre de la Pléiade, to clarify the criteria for nomination and promotion, and to make the procedures for evaluating applications more rigorous. The main improvements are a better description and clarification of the rules for awarding the five levels of the Ordre; the creation of an investigative committee responsible for examining the eligibility of proposals, composed of four francophone figures from outside the APF; respect of gender parity in the proposed nominations; the formalization of the procedure for presenting awards; the possibility of removal from the list for failure to uphold the ideals of the Francophonie; clearer budgetary and accounting procedures; and the implementation of a prestigious and exhaustive directory of previously nominated individuals.

**René Villemure** (Canada) applauded the work done and suggested that the Code should contain more details on the investigative committee.

The new Code was adopted unanimously.

### **Institutional activities**

The following programming was adopted as presented:

1. The joint meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the Parliamentary Affairs Committee from March 1-3, 2023 (Rabat, Morocco);
2. The meeting of the Political Committee and the meeting of the Working Group on the revision of the APF Constitution from April 17-20, 2023 (Paris, France);
3. The meeting of the Education, Cultural Affairs and Communication Committee from April 24-26 (Ottawa, Canada);
4. Meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee on May 25 and 26 (Quebec City, Canada).

President **Drouin** then called on Bureau members to support Georgia's bid to host the 48<sup>th</sup> annual session, despite the provision in the current APF Constitution that does not allow an observer to be a candidate to host an APF activity. The choice of Tbilisi, Georgia, from July 4-8, 2023, was unanimously endorsed.

The proposal of the French Community of Belgium to host the 2024 Winter bureau was also unanimously adopted.

### **Other business**

President **Drouin** has obtained a mandate from the Bureau to initiate the process of obtaining observer status at the United Nations in order to expand the international influence of the APF.



Members welcomed the announcement of the settlement of Vanuatu's dues in arrears and the Bureau decided to amend the draft cooperation programs adopted earlier, adding an inter-parliamentary cooperation seminar for this branch in 2023.

At the initiative of the Gabonese Branch, a vote of thanks was extended to the Polynesian Branch.

The Bureau's record of decisions was adopted.

### **Award ceremony of the Ordre de la Pléiade**

President Drouin presided over the award ceremony and decorated Gaston Tong Sang, President of the Assembly of French Polynesia and host of the Bureau meeting; Joseph Maroun for his work promoting the Francophonie; and Flora Aurima for all of her literary and humanitarian work.

### **Site visits**

Bureau participants had the opportunity to visit several sites proposed by the host branch. First, delegates were given an overview of Sea Water Air Conditioning, one of the largest facilities in Polynesia. An energy transition project, this piping system uses seawater to provide air-conditioning to the Centre Hospitalier de la Polynésie française (Papeete). There was then a short talk on the role and objectives of the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centres, followed by a tour of this facility which provides search and rescue at sea, environmental preservation and protection of maritime resources.

Bureau members then toured the Teahupoo rahui area established in 2014. Covering an area of 768 hectares, it aims to preserve, restore and sustainably use the resources around the protected area.

The parliamentarians were briefed on the maritime area management plan, a long-term management tool for Polynesian lagoons that determines the conditions for their use, management, protection and development.

They were also briefed on the challenges of the Polynesian islands in terms of drinking water production and distribution, wastewater treatment and waste management. Different sustainable solutions were presented.

Finally, participants were given a guided tour of a state-of-the-art fish processing facility that uses several innovative techniques to catch, prepare and sell fish products.

Respectfully Submitted,

Francis Drouin, M.P.

President of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie  
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<br>parlementaire de la Francophonie          |
| <b>ACTIVITY</b>       | Meeting of the Bureau of the<br>Assemblée parlementaire de la<br>Francophonie |
| <b>DESTINATION</b>    | Papeete, French Polynesia, France   |
| <b>DATES</b>          | From January 28 to February 2, 2023   |
| <b>DELEGATION</b>     |   |
| SENATE                |   |
|                       | Francis Drouin  |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS      | Joël Godin*   |
|                       | René Villemure*   |
| STAFF                 | Julie Pelletier   |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION</b> | \$ 18,124.90  |
| <b>ACCOMMODATION</b>  | \$ 8,498.29   |
| <b>PER DIEMS</b>      | \$ 1,162.44   |
| <b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b> | \$ 284.97   |
| <b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>  | \$ 0.00   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$ 28,070.60</b>   |

*\*Flight credit applied to air ticket.*