

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

Parliamentary Mission to the United Nations

New York, New York, United States of America

March 14 and 15, 2023

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) is honoured to present this report on its parliamentary mission to the United Nations on March 14 and 15, 2023. The Canadian delegation consisted of Members of Parliament **Francis Drouin**, Chair, **Darrell Samson**, Vice-Chair and **Joël Godin**, member, who were accompanied by administrative secretary Julie Pelletier.

PARLIAMENTARY MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

On January 31, 2023, the APF Bureau instructed the President of the APF, **Francis Drouin**, to begin the process of applying for the APF to be granted observer status by the United Nations. As part of this process, a delegation of the Canadian Branch of the APF travelled to New York for an exploratory mission on March 14 and 15, 2023.

The delegation met with the following United Nations experts, who offered advice on how the APF could achieve its objective: Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel; Wensheng Qu and Douglas Pivnichny of the Secretariat of the Sixth Committee (Legal Affairs); and Béatrice Maillé, Minister-Counselor (Legal, Social and Human Rights) and Legal Adviser, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations. These experts told the delegation about the format and criteria of the observer status application, the steps for obtaining approval, the various UN bodies involved in the process.

MEETINGS

The second objective of this mission was to give the delegation a chance to meet with prominent figures who are keeping the values of the Francophonie alive at the United Nations and in New York and to promote awareness of measures that the APF is taking to help youth and to support francophone countries dealing with constitutional crises.

Meeting with Marija Vasileva-Blazev, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

Ms. Vasileva-Blazev talked about what the office is doing to get youth involved and put youth participation and interests in the spotlight in multilateral spaces. She cited the example of the *Be Seen Be Heard campaign*, a collaboration with Body Shop that is aimed at promoting youth participation in public life. She also talked about the UN Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, which will be taking place from April 25 to 27, 2024, and will provide a platform for young people to engage in a dialogue with member states and other actors to voice their views and concerns and galvanize action on how to transform the world into a fairer, greener and more sustainable place guided by the Sustainable Development Goals.

The APF President commended Ms. Vasileva-Blazev for the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office. He stated that, as the youngest President in the history of the APF, he intends to make youth-related issues a priority during his tenure. He highlighted the APF's Young Parliamentarians Network, which was created in 2019 to increase the political representation and participation of people under 40. Lastly, he talked about the

Francophone Youth Parliament, which was held in July 2022 in Tirana, Albania, and the APF's efforts to create a regional francophone youth parliament in West Africa.

Opportunities for collaboration between the two organizations were also discussed.

Meeting with Robert Rae, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

The delegation met with Robert Rae to discuss the APF's intention of seeking UN observer status and, more specifically, its search for member nations who would agree to sponsor its application. Mr. **Drouin** also explained the various roles that the APF could play in the francophone community, especially in crisis situations, with its good offices missions. Mr. **Drouin** and the ambassador then discussed the challenges of multilingualism at the UN and what Canada can do to encourage the use of French at the UN.

Meeting with His Excellency Richard Arbeiter, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

The delegation met with Richard Arbeiter and UN experts to discuss the situation in the Sahel, Haiti and Ukraine. The discussions centred on the democratic turmoil that has broken out in these francophone countries.

Jérôme Mellon, Head of the Policy and Operational Support Team at the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peace Operations, is coordinating efforts in West Africa and the Sahel. He gave a brief overview of the situation in the Sahel, highlighting the security challenges and the weakening of MINUSMA as a result of an increase in violent events linked to the presence of Islamist groups in the region. Measures that Canada and the APF could take to facilitate dialogue and strengthen ties among various stakeholders in the region were also discussed.

Stéphane Jean is coordinating programs in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau and programs related to crimes against UN personnel. He outlined the current situation in Haiti, underscoring the increase in armed violence, the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the fact that there are no elected parliamentarians left in the country. He also covered potential solutions for helping the country overcome the crisis, such as deploying an international military force, maintaining economic sanctions, building the Haitian police's capacity, assisting domestic authorities in investigating serious crimes, and reinforcing arms and munitions control. In closing, Mr. Jean urged the APF to continue to stand in solidarity with the parliamentarians who are still there and with future elected officials.

Erwan Pouchous, Team Leader for Eastern Europe, discussed the origins of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the measures taken by the UN on this file. He talked about the Security Council's paralysis on this issue and the resolutions that were supported by Canada. Mr. **Drouin** noted that the Francophonie could be an ally to the UN.

Meeting with His Excellency Tom Clark, Consul General of Canada in New York

Mr. **Drouin** congratulated His Excellency for his appointment. He then outlined the reasons for his visit to New York. The Consul talked about New York's vibrant francophone community and offered his support for any initiative that would help this community continue to thrive. Sabrina Yoong then told the delegation about the number of requests for French-language services that the consulate receives, the consulate's success rate in fulfilling those requests, and the percentage of consulate staff who are bilingual.

Meeting with Patricia Herdt, Deputy Permanent Representative for the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

Ms. Herdt gave an overview of the OIF's activities at the UN since 1978. The OIF also works to support New York's francophone community in the areas of education and culture. For instance, it hosts the Printemps de la Francophonie event, which took place from March to June 2023.

Mr. Godin mentioned the close ties between the OIF and the APF and noted that the synergy between the two organizations is vital for increasing the Francophonie's impact within international bodies like the UN. He stated that if the APF is granted observer status, there would be many opportunities for collaboration between these two organizations, particularly with regard to parliamentarians' role in crisis situations where the UN is currently carrying out peacekeeping interventions, the fight against disinformation, gender equality, and multilingualism and the use of French at the UN. Ms. Herdt offered advice on how the APF can succeed with its application and suggested ways that the OIF could contribute.

Meeting with His Excellency Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations, President of the Francophone Ambassadors Group in New York

The President of the APF met with His Excellency Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the UN. They discussed the possibility of a collaboration to secure the status of French as a working language at the UN, the ongoing need to demand the adoption of an effective interpretation system, and Djibouti–Canada relations.

Meeting with Martine Hébert, Quebec's Delegate General in New York, Quebec Government Office in New York

The delegation met with Ms. Hébert to discuss the Quebec Government Office and its role, which is to promote Quebec interests in New York. Ms. Hébert noted that the New York office was the first office that Quebec opened abroad, back in the 1940s. Its responsibilities include maintaining political relations with U.S. elected officials and promoting initiatives related to the Francophonie in all areas, particularly education, culture, science and innovation.

The President of the APF told the Delegate General about the objectives of his visit to New York. He discussed the decline of French at the UN and the challenges that various organizations, including the Parliament of Canada, are having with translation and

interpretation. Mr. **Samson** also addressed the issue of French in a minority context and its decline in North America.

Meeting with Nathalie Broadhurst, Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations

The delegates met with Nathalie Broadhurst to discuss the vitality of the Francophonie at the United Nations and the central role that France must play in standing up for multilingualism and the use of the French language at the UN and in New York.

Mr. Drouin noted that the APF is also actively campaigning to defend the French language and that it would be advisable and advantageous for the two countries to join forces to fight the decline in the use of French at the UN. He expressed his hope that France would support the APF's application for observer status.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, M.P.

President, Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Chair, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

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| ASSOCIATION | Association parlementaire de la Francophonie |
| ACTIVITY | Parliamentary Mission to the United Nations |
| DESTINATION | New York, New York, United States of America |
| DATES | March 14 and 15, 2023 |
| DELEGATION | |
| SENATE | Francis Drouin |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS | Darrell Samson Joël Godin |
| STAFF | Julie Pelletier |
| TRANSPORTATION | \$5,736.23 |

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|---|-------------------|
| ACCOMMODATION | \$2,186.30 |
| HOSPITALITY | \$324.27 |
| PER DIEMS | \$1,593.58 |
| OFFICIAL GIFTS | \$0.00 |
| MISCELLANEOUS OR REGISTRATION FEES | \$0.00 |
| TOTAL | \$9,850.38 |