

Canada - France
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
on its Involvement in the Second Round of the French
Presidential Election**

Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

**Paris, France
May 3 to 6, 2012**

Report

The Canadian delegation comprised the Honourable Claudette Tardif, Senator and Chair of the Canadian Group of the Association; the Honourable Michel Rivard, Senator; the Honourable Denis Coderre, MP; Annick Papillon, MP; and Matthew Dubé, MP. Executive Secretary Serge Pelletier travelled with the delegates. The Canadian ambassador, Marc Berthiaume, accompanied the delegation during its stay in the Paris area. The Canadian delegation extends heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Lortie and his staff for ensuring that the parliamentary mission, the third of its kind since 2002, was meticulously organized and flawlessly run.

The entire program was dedicated to the second round of the French presidential election between outgoing president Nicolas Sarkozy, a candidate for the UPM, and Socialist Party candidate François Hollande.

During their stay in France, Senator Tardif, Chair of the Canadian Group, and two members of the Executive Committee, Mr. Coderre and Senator Rivard, met with H  l  ne Conway-Mouret, President of the Groupe d'amiti   France/Canada in France; Catherine Coutelle, Deputy; and Senator Duvernois at the Senate to discuss issues of concern to our two associations and themes for the meeting being held in Canada in November.

Thursday, May 3

a) Working meeting at the Canadian embassy

On Thursday, May 3, the Canadian delegation was received at the Canadian embassy in France for a briefing on the embassy's view of the election campaign and its implications for Canada.

In the absence of Ambassador Lortie, charg  e d'affaires Louise Blais chaired the meeting, to which several embassy staff had been invited. Ms. Blais observed that having parliamentarians present made the Chancellery's work easier during a period of change in French political life.

Marc Berthiaume briefly explained France's two-round political system, noting that in the first round of the presidential election, the centrist forces fell behind, while the extreme left and right parties gained ground, an indication that voters were angry. The campaign played out against a backdrop of crisis in the euro zone as the economic situation in Greece, Spain and Italy steadily worsened. Conditions are such that all over the continent, people are mad, protectionism is on the rise, and globalization, immigration, Europe, liberalism and capitalism are being rejected. Still, these difficult times provide an opportunity to look at debt and public finances with new clarity, when the prospect of higher taxes and budget cuts is uppermost in people's minds. It was in that general climate that candidate François Hollande proposed to create wealth before sharing it, whereas his opponent, Nicolas Sarkozy, opted to take the populist approach and denounce the elite. Mr. Sarkozy's very style became an election issue. Mr. Berthiaume

told the delegates that with four days to go before the vote, the pundits had Mr. Hollande ahead with 53% over Mr. Sarkozy at 47%.

Chantal Chastenev noted that France's foreign policy did not figure into the campaign other than with respect to Europe. Hollande suggested that France would play a smaller role globally, whereas Sarkozy is a militant Atlantist. Flavie Major made the point that foreign policy had not been discussed during the previous night's debate, yet major international meetings will be taking place in the near future: a G8 summit at Camp David in the United States, a NATO summit in Chicago, etc. If a new president were to be elected on May 6, there would have to be continuity in foreign policy in most cases: G8, G20, Middle East, etc. On the other hand, Hollande said that French troops would be immediately pulled out of Afghanistan and that, being more pragmatic, he might expand the Quai d'Orsay's role in foreign policy. As well, the new president might lend greater support to the Palestinians. With regard to Canada-France relations, there is general agreement on all issues.

Economic attaché Jean Dominique Ieraci believes that France's economy is relatively healthy compared to those of its European neighbours. The deficit is big, to be sure, and the 10% unemployment rate, especially among young persons, is alarming, but the rigidity and high cost of the work world are equally worrisome, France being the victim of increasing deindustrialization, whereas 56% of the economy is dependent on the government. France is a wealthy country with a high rate of saving, but competitiveness is a problem. French business leaders, who as a whole are not a "social right," are taking the outgoing president to task for his economic inconsistency and his failure to listen, but they also fear the pretender and his entourage, whom they consider too anti-business, anti-nuclear, too protectionist or too green. Mr. Ieraci expressed the view that if Hollande were to be elected, and depending on whom he chose for his cabinet, markets could be adversely affected.

Turning his attention to the economic relationship between Canada and France, Mr. Ieraci underscored the importance of mutual investment and the future free trade agreement. Both the left and the right love Canada. The Socialists want to make sure the free trade agreement is not a Trojan horse for products imported from third countries through Canada, and they also hope to protect trade in cultural property. French farmers are very wary about freer trade with Canada, and few of them vote left.

Political attaché Cyrille Sanchez had thought that Mr. Sarkozy's presidential campaign was going to focus on financial stability and the euro crisis, but the precarious nature of the economy, unemployment, the "golden rule" of tackling the public deficit and foreigners were the main themes, along with a challenge of the Schengen zone. Hollande, meanwhile, spoke out against the golden rule on deficits and proposed to renegotiate the European stability agreement and replace it with a growth pact. The French left is afraid of the growth of emerging countries like China, India and Brazil. If he were to be elected, Hollande would be quite isolated in Europe among right-wing governments, particularly in Germany and the United Kingdom. Historically, however, pragmatism has carried the day in Europe, and a France-Germany compromise on financial stability, the role of the Central European Bank and a European growth policy would not be out of the question, even with a change of government.

The question-and-answer period that followed focused on the possible consequences of a left-wing president and a left-wing government not only for French issues, but for Canada-France issues also, such as tax on financial transactions, supply management in the context of a free trade agreement, La Francophonie, Arab Spring, nuclear energy and the environment. The embassy staff do not think there will be any major changes on these key issues.

b) Visit to the head office of the UPM, Mr. Sarkozy's campaign headquarters

The delegation went to Vaugirard Street in the 15th arrondissement of Paris to visit the head office of the Union for a Popular Movement (UPM), Mr. Sarkozy's campaign headquarters. The delegates met Hervé Novelli, assistant secretary general of the campaign team. Mr. Novelli is a member of the National Assembly, a former Secretary of State in the Fillion government and a former member of the European Parliament.

Mr. Novelli began by stating quite frankly that given the crises happening in a number of European countries (Spain, Italy and Greece), Sarkozy's and the UPM's campaign is not good for the government. It is inevitable in a democracy that power is going to shift back and forth, and in France, that is a normal outcome after more than a decade with the right and the centre in control. Mr. Novelli also acknowledged that Sarkozy is not personally supported by the public. With the vote just days away, Mr. Novelli admitted that the campaign was hard. He pointed out that Sarkozy fared very badly in the initial polls before the first round, and there was a possibility he would not advance to the runoff. The first-round results were therefore satisfying under the circumstances. He reminded the delegation of the outcome of the first round: a win by the Socialist Party (SP) candidate, a strong showing by the National Front (NF), marginalization of the centre candidate (Bayrou), and relative success for the Left Front. He observed that the electorate was clearly divided. For Sarkozy to win on May 6, he has to convince centre and NF voters. Between the two rounds, the outgoing president addressed both groups, talking about such issues as border protection, exiting the euro zone, economic stabilization and deficit control. Mr. Novelli observed that the outcome of the previous night's televised debate between Sarkozy and Hollande was not entirely clear. Post-debate polls showed that there was no real winner and that Sarkozy was still ahead in qualitative polls. In other words, the game was not over yet. Mr. Novelli reiterated that Sarkozy is a scrapper and said that there had been a very successful rally in Toulon a few days earlier. Finally, he briefly described campaign headquarters, its small staff, the role of the campaign committee, which meets with the candidate once a week, and efforts to mobilize active supporters.

Asked about the potential voter turnout for the second round, Mr. Novelli said that the rate is usually higher than for the first round, but he could not say whether voters would heed the National Front and François Bayrou; turnout might be lower if they did.

Mr. Novelli went on to discuss the possibility of a third coalition in the Fifth Republic following the June legislative elections. He simply noted that most regions and departments were now controlled by the left, that the SP was ahead in Paris, too, that the NF was surging in the industrial east, which is being affected by outsourcing, and that discontent with the European Union's common agricultural policy did not augur well

for the right. On the subject of the rise of the far right, Mr. Novelli explained the difference between Jean-Marie le Pen and his daughter Marine. Le Pen the father often made extreme statements and portrayed himself as a champion of small business and merchants. Marine is a politician of a different stripe. She turned the traditional right wing on its ear by winning back discontented members of the UPM. Mr. Novelli agreed that social media have become a must for politicians. However, for the most part, social media simply create an environment; they do not effect a great deal of change. He suggested that the UPM was in a precarious spot: campaigning too far to the right would drive away centrists, but taking the middle road would cost it right-wing voters. That said, the UPM is still a very powerful party, as witnessed by the huge political rallies it held before the first round and between the two rounds. Mr. Novelli added, however, that Europe is in crisis and that social democracy has disappeared in Norway and Sweden but is still faintly visible in France because of the high level of social spending, which has caused public deficits to soar. Mr. Novelli said that the public deficit has to be reduced, but social policies have to be preserved because of the crisis. With the election just days away, Mr. Novelli expressed the view that Sarkozy's five-year record was less important. Parts of Sarkozy's platform-barring foreigners from voting in municipal elections and applying the golden rule policy on deficits and public debt-could still change the outcome.

Friday, May 4

a) Meeting at the Ministry of the Interior

In the morning, the Canadian delegation attended a briefing at the Ministry of the Interior. Two other foreign parliamentary delegations (Kenya and Kirghizistan) were present.

In Canada and other countries, the entire election process is overseen by an independent body like Elections Canada. In France, however, that responsibility falls to the ministries of the Interior, Public Safety, and Regional Planning. In keeping with the history and tradition of French elections, the role of the Ministry of the Interior in the election process is never discussed, nor have the roles of the minister, mayors or prefects, who have a duty of confidentiality. Every act is under the scrutiny of a judge whose task is to ensure the freedom, equality and sincerity of the vote and who has the authority to cancel an election if violations are found to have been committed.

The presentation was made by Yves le Breton and Frédéric Potier of the ministry's elections and political studies office.

Mr. le Breton gave an overview of the French system and pointed out a number of unique features. In 2012, there are 46 million registered voters. Voter turnout for the first round was 80.5% (36 million), down from 85.5% in 2007. This is the ninth presidential election since 1965. The president is elected through a two-round majority vote: voters choose in the first round and eliminate in the second. To qualify as a presidential candidate, a person must have the support of 500 elected officials, usually mayors. In 2012, there were 10 candidates in the first round, compared with 12 in 2007 and 16 in 2002. Both rounds of presidential voting take place on a Sunday, except in overseas territories and America, where voting takes place on Saturday. The results are

announced at 8:00 p.m. Sunday and must be validated by the Constitutional Council no later than the following Wednesday. Two monitoring agencies have been created: a national monitoring committee checks documents, election advertisements and platforms; and a polling committee makes sure they are true. Poll results cannot be released after midnight on the Friday preceding the election. Polls can be conducted on voting day, but the results cannot be released before 8:00 p.m. Foreign media can release poll results, but the Constitutional Council can determine whether the disclosure of those results influenced the overall outcome; those rules are monitored by the Audiovisual Council. Starting the Friday before the vote, candidates are prohibited from distributing pamphlets or other material. Security inside each polling station is overseen by a returning officer. Police are responsible for security outside. Demonstrations and rallies are not permitted on voting day.

Several levels of government are involved in elections. Federally, apart from the Ministry of the Interior, the Quai d'Orsay (Foreign Affairs) is responsible for voting by French citizens outside France. At the departmental and municipal levels, prefects and mayors also have responsibilities. In major cities, people can vote until 8:00 p.m., but in rural areas, the polls close at 6:00 p.m., which creates a problem because local results could be leaked before 8:00 p.m.. Experience has shown, however, that very few results are ever disclosed. Counting begins as soon as voting is complete, and the results are sent to the departmental prefect's office, which forwards them electronically to the Ministry of the Interior. These are general estimates. First thing Monday morning, the departments' tallies are reviewed by the Constitutional Council, and it is not until the following Wednesday at the latest that the official results and the winner of the presidential election are proclaimed. After the presidential election, the ministry gets ready for the legislative elections, draws up candidate lists, etc. The budget for an election is approximately 220 million euros and includes any reimbursement candidates may receive.

The French election system allows proxy voting. There is no provision for advance polls, mail-in votes or Internet voting. Proxy voting was introduced because of school vacation; 9.5% of Paris voters cast proxy votes in the first round of the 2012 presidential election. France has always resisted advance polls because proxy voting is a way of encouraging people to get out and vote. Advance polls would mean there would have to be ballot boxes in all regions of the country for a month, which would be very costly and would undermine the tradition of public counting. Similarly, France has yet to embrace voting by mail or the Internet because of the very high technical requirements of ensuring there are no security breaches.

There are 1,800 polling stations for French citizens living outside France. Historically, there have been few challenges of election results as happened in the 2000 election between Bush and Kerry in the United States.

Challenges of presidential election results are resolved by the Constitutional Council. For other types of election, challenges are resolved by administrative judges.

A new element was introduced for the 2012 legislative elections: 11 constituencies were created around the world for French citizens living outside the country. Ballots are sent by diplomatic pouch, and embassies and consulates are responsible for setting up

polling stations. The legitimacy of votes cast by French citizens living abroad is not thought to be capable of swinging the national vote: citizens living outside the country have the same voting rights as those who live in continental France. Traditionally, turnout is lower among voters who live outside France.

b) Meeting with French parliamentarians in the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

A meeting with three French parliamentarians who are members of the Association was held at the Senate. The French representatives were Senator Conway-Mouret, Senator Louis Duvernois and National Assembly member Christine Coutelle. Canada was represented by Senator Tardif, Chair of the Canadian Group, the Honourable Denis Coderre and Senator Michel Rivard, all as members of the Canadian Executive Committee.

Senator Conway-Mouret raised the matter of legislative elections for French citizens living abroad, particularly those in Montreal. Many representations have been made to the Canadian embassy in Paris, including by the Speaker of the Senate, but the Government of Canada refuses to open polling stations anywhere other than at the consulate. Because there are about 45,000 French citizens in the Montreal area, two rounds of legislative elections create major logistical and public safety problems, and France would like Canada to accommodate it in that regard. The French parliamentarians asked the Canadian Group of the Association to intervene with the federal government. Senator Rivard undertook to raise the matter with Canadian officials.

The French parliamentarians then went on to raise the matter of the themes for the Association's next two meetings as decided at the March 2012 meeting of the Standing Committee. The Executive Committee of the Canadian Group proposed changing the themes and informed the French members accordingly following a meeting in April 2012, on grounds that the theme of Canada-European Union free trade should take precedence over the theme of retirement and pensions and that the other theme, "sustainable cities," could not be addressed by federal parliamentarians because it falls under municipal and provincial jurisdiction.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the two themes the Association will discuss over the next year are:

1. sustainable development issues; and
2. economic and social issues and challenges related to retirement and pensions.

It was further agreed that the theme of sustainable development will cover productivity and competitiveness issues facing Canada and France.

c) Lunch at the official residence of the Canadian ambassador with leaders of influential political think tanks and political scientists

In Ambassador Lortie's absence, Ms. Blais, chargée d'affaires at the Canadian embassy, hosted a working lunch with several French parliamentarians and representatives of prestigious French think tanks asked to give their perspective of the presidential campaign and the outcome.

The first speaker, Henri Nallet, a former member of the National Assembly and minister and Vice-President of the Fondation Jean Jaurès, stated that the surprise in the first round was the surge of the National Front, fuelled by anger, disappointment and fatigue among a large contingent of voters, feelings expressed in the context of the European crisis. Such displays of anger are not unique to France, as witnessed by recent events in Hungary, the Netherlands and Greece. Magali Balent, a researcher with the Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS) and the Fondation Robert Schuman and author of the recent book *Le monde selon Marine*, attributed the success of the National Front to a platform that voters could relate to: anti-Islam, anti-globalism and anti-Europe. She added that six out of the 10 candidates were anti-Europe. Laurent Bigorgne, director of the Institut Montaigne, a liberal think tank made up of representatives of several major public and private companies in France, named the sectors which have been in trouble in France since the suburban riots of 2005 and have undermined French society: housing, education, unemployment, security, political involvement and religion. The government's inability to solve these problems or make up lost ground is giving rise to new forces and pockets of resistance. Mr. Bigorgne cited the case of two communes in Clichy-sous-Bois where there are no police officers and no gynecologists. The candidates ignored the two communes during the campaign, yet the challenges of academic success and employment among youth in both places are enormous. Romain Prudent, Secretary General of Terra Nova, suggested that France is in the midst of a deep political reconfiguration. Frédéric Monlouis-Félicité, Delegate General of the Institut de l'entreprise, suggested that the campaign to that point had been characterized by regression, geographic at first (anti Europe, anti globalization) and later ideological (rejection of the "rupture" Sarkozy called for in 2007). He suggested that the idea of sweeping change was never put forward in 2012. He observed that a third of French voters chose an extremist party, 18% of voters 25 and under chose the National Front, and 37% did not vote at all.

Guillaume Klossa, founding president of Europa Nova, brought the discussion around to European issues. He said that growth in France depends on the growth of its neighbours. European growth must lead to a growth pact rather than an austerity pact, based on four pillars: a) innovation and investment; b) focus on sectors of the future; c) initiatives to go outside the limited European domestic market and look for markets in Asia; and d) one-year European treasury bills. There is a lack of innovation in France, Mr. Klossa said, in both small and medium-size businesses, as goods do not meet the needs, and France is less competitive than Germany. Mr. Nallet's opinion on that subject is that the Germans first, but also other European countries, will have to come to an agreement and gain a broader understanding of Hollande's policies if he is elected. He suggested that the European Commission will also have to put proposals on the table, but any European recovery policy will give rise to disputes over issues like the budget or the common agricultural policy. He went on to say that France and Germany have to cooperate on all levels and European institutions have to operate normally. Senator Conway-Mouret suggested that if Mr. Hollande is elected, there could be political changes in Germany, Italy and elsewhere in Europe. She made the point that historically, the partnerships between French presidents Mitterrand and Giscard and German chancellors Kohl and Schroeder respectively worked well, even though the leaders had opposing political sensibilities.

Mr. Bigorgne talked about the 2007 reform that gave French universities more autonomy, which was a step in the right direction in terms of innovation, and expressed the view that it is important to keep moving forward. He made the point that France has not created the same institutions as the United States or the United Kingdom. Finally, France has problems with funding for innovation and competitiveness, and on that subject, the Institut de l'entreprise believes that first and foremost, the problem of the public deficit has to be resolved.

Chair Claudette Tardif expressed to the guests Canada's and Canadians' strong interest in France and its elections, which are getting a great deal of media attention. Canada's priorities right now are the economy and trade, from the standpoint of a Canada-Europe free trade agreement. MP Matthew Dubé voiced his party's concern about the agreement, particularly the provisions on supply management. Mr. Nallet reiterated that in that respect, the presidential campaign took place against a backdrop of criticism of deregulation and more open markets: when it comes to trade, the goal for Hollande is reciprocity. The draft free trade agreement was ignored during the campaign, as was the common agricultural policy. Hollande is apprehensive about bilateral free trade agreements and instead came out in favour of the World Trade Organization process.

d) Visit to François Hollande's campaign headquarters

The Canadian delegation attended a meeting with Maurice Braud, the Socialist Party's international relations specialist.

Mr. Braud talked about the SP primaries that consolidated Hollande's and the party's appeal for the left in general. They made it possible to compile a list of 150,000 to 200,000 activists and 600,000 to 800,000 voters. He said he believes the presidential campaign was more positive than expected. Hollande's opponents underestimated him. With only hours to go before the second round, confidence was high. There had been a slight dip in the polls in the previous few days. The better Hollande did, the more latitude the new president would have both in France and in Europe as a whole.

Mr. Braud's next topic was the organization of a presidential campaign, which is subject to very strict financial constraints for the candidates. The SP's budget was 20,000 euros. There were fewer staff than in 2007 and 2002. On the other hand, social networks were used more and more. He noted that political activism is declining in France, but paradoxically, there is a great deal of interest in public affairs. The Internet and large political rallies were used to garner support in the presidential election, but so, too, was door-to-door canvassing in popular areas considered to have low voter turnout. The projections of turnout in the first round proved to be inaccurate.

Mr. Braud said that Hollande's campaign team, led by Pierre Moscovici, is limited to a few permanent staffers assigned to handle specific themes.

Asked about negotiations among leftist groups between the two rounds, Mr. Braud replied that there were not really any, but there could be before the legislative elections. There was, of course, an agreement with the Greens on the closure of a nuclear plant and a 50% reduction in nuclear energy by 2025. To illustrate the point, he said that some leftist candidates and personalities attended the big SP rally in Toulouse (Éva

Joly, Robert Hue), but Jean-Luc Mélenchon was not there. Mélenchon lost much of the extreme left and marginalized personalities like Arlette Laguiller and Besancenot, who had been candidates in 2007.

Mr. Braud talked about Hollande's 55 proposals. Sarkozy, meanwhile, never launched a platform apart from a few incoherent initiatives. There were several small debates during the campaign-hallal meat-but nothing major. The European crisis, for example, was not mentioned during the debates.

Saturday, May 5

In the morning, the delegation went to the head office of the weekly newspaper *L'Express* in the 9th arrondissement of Paris for an election breakfast hosted by the polling firm BVA. *L'Express* had invited the firm's CEO, Gaël Sliman, and the former Minister of Education in Sarkozy's cabinet, Luc Ferry, as well as other journalists for a round table led by editor-in-chief Christophe Barbier. The occasion was the private release of the last BVA poll; poll results cannot be released to the public within two days of an election.

After the first round, the polls showed Hollande in front with 54.5%. The day before the second round, the BVA results were 52.5% for Hollande and 47.5% for Sarkozy. The first conclusion was that the May debate did not alter the trends that had been observed since the first round.

Mr. Ferry offered the following analysis of the next day's vote. Sarkozy was confident that he was going to win, that he was going to get more NF votes than expected, and that there was an underestimated Sarkozy phenomenon and a dynamic which the polls did not show. If he lost, he could blame the crisis and the relationship with the NF. Commenting on centrist candidate Bayrou, who personally endorsed Hollande between the two rounds but left his supporters free to choose a candidate, Mr. Ferry said he had no other choice, because he was certain Sarkozy was going to lose. Did Hollande go on the defence between the two rounds? Perhaps, but to Mr. Ferry's mind, the three themes of his campaign-fraternity, youth and the European growth pact—were strong.

The sociodemographic data from the poll indicate that all age groups except 65 and over voted for Hollande. The same was true for income brackets. 66% of the public service voted for Hollande, but Sarkozy drew the most self-employed voters. Mr. Ferry said that if Sarkozy had adopted solidarity as a theme, he might have won over the majority of voters. In his view, most members of the UPM would have liked to have François Fillion as their candidate. Hollande, meanwhile, chose the right themes. Mr. Sliman pointed out that Sarkozy's excitability, impetuosity and willingness to roll up his sleeves are assets in times of crisis, but his campaign focused too much on immigration. Reviewing the new poll, Mr. Sliman said that 10% of voters were still undecided, so mathematically the race is still on. The announcement that Bayrou was backing Hollande against the majority of his camp boosted support from centrist voters from 36% to 43%. Bayrou's position can be attributed to his inability to deal with Sarkozy's swing to the right. Mr. Ferry said that Bayrou had wanted to be the right-wing candidate and the face of a future party like the Democratic Party in the United States. The NF president's direction to abstain gave Sarkozy an additional 3% of the votes.

The gap between the candidates in polls has narrowed since the presidential campaign began. Sarkozy's popularity had remained steady at around 33% since 2009, and his performance was given a score of 74% by the public. People's priorities in France are unemployment and the environment. 60% support the left. All these indicators suggest that Sarkozy could lose by a bigger margin than the polls show. According to the polls, the race is getting tighter because of a "tropism" effect: everyone goes home in the end. What all this means is that there could be a surprise on May 6, because there are still plenty of right-wing voters.

For Mr. Ferry, the question of future generations is the new thing in European politics. The average age at which young people in Spain move out of their parents' home is 31; the average in France is 26. Young people are concerned about the environment, public debt, future wars and globalization. Everything has a red flag for them: housing, employment, education, etc. All are subjects which the left has addressed, whereas Sarkozy decided that the "border" was the main issue. He tried to seduce his enemies, including Bernard Henri Lévy, Michel Debré and Michel Onfray. To seduce the old, Mr. Ferry concluded, talk to them about the young.

In the evening, several delegates went to the Gaveau Theatre in the 8th arrondissement of Paris to see a play called *Tout ce que vous devez savoir avant d'aller voter* [everything you need to know before you vote]. The comedy was written specially for the election campaign. It is billed as taking a look at the candidates and their platforms in order to help the undecided and make the believers think again.

Sunday, May 6

In the late afternoon, the delegation went to a polling station in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. The delegates met returning officer Emmanuel Pierrat, who explained how voting is done and pointed out all the controls that are place to ensure an orderly but reliable process: registration, checking of proxy votes, presentation of ballots, the voting booth, declaration by an officer that Mr. or Ms. X cast a vote, etc. In Canada, ballots list all the candidates. In France, voters are given a separate ballot for each candidate and an envelope before they step into the booth. They then place the ballot of their choice in the envelope. If the envelope placed in the ballot box is empty or contains two or more ballots, or if the names are crossed out, etc., those ballots are considered spoiled.

The delegation then split in two. One group went to the Salle de la Mutualité in the 5th arrondissement to join a gathering of Sarkozy supporters. The other went to Socialist Party headquarters on Solferino Street in the 7th arrondissement.

At precisely 8:00 p.m., the preliminary results flashed on giant screens at both venues: a win for Mr. Hollande, 52.5% to 47.5%. The numbers changed slightly as the evening progressed, but in the end, the left-wing candidate won with 51.7%. At 10:30 p.m., Mr. Sarkozy spoke to his supporters at La Mutualité in a brief and very republican speech that was both dignified and eloquent. Before returning to Paris for a victory celebration at the Bastille, Mr. Hollande gave his acceptance speech In the Corrèze city of Tulle, reiterating his promises to the people of France.

Conclusion

The Canadian delegation was privileged to have a front-row seat for a major political change in France. The campaign was bitter and the finish tight, but the defeated candidate's graceful exit and the smooth transition that followed Mr. Hollande's election epitomize all that is good about democracy. The high voter turnout-more than 80%-speaks volumes about the strength of democracy in France.

The delegates returned to Canada with a better understanding of the French voting system and a fresh perspective on the major economic, social and demographic issues affecting France and Europe as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Claudette Tardif, Senator
Chair of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Second round of presidential elections
DESTINATION	Paris, France
DATES	May 3 to 6, 2012
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. Claudette Tardif, Senator The Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	The Hon. Denis Coderre, C.P., M.P. Mr. Matthew Dubé, M.P. Ms. Annick Papillon, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier, Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7, 754. 30
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 6, 838. 67
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0. 00
PER DIEMS	\$ 3, 490. 27
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0. 00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 15. 00
TOTAL	\$ 18, 098. 24