

Canada - France
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the Meeting of the Standing
Committee**

Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

**Paris, France
February 15 to 17, 2010**

Report

The parliamentary delegation from the Canadian Group of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association was in Paris from February 15 to 17, 2010 to attend the meeting of the Association's Standing Committee, which meets between the Annual Meetings of the Association to select the dates, working themes and places of those meetings. The delegation took advantage of its stay to expand on the usual themes in order to address a number of bilateral issues and matters of common interest.

The official delegation, led by the Chair, Claudette Tardif, consisted of the following members: the Honourable Claudette Tardif, Senator, Chair of the Canadian Group; the Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, Senator, Vice-Chair; and Ms. Paule Brunelle, MP, Vice-Chair. Mr. Serge Pelletier, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Group, accompanied the delegation.

Monday, February 15, 2010

(a) Briefing Session at the Canadian Embassy

Late in the morning, the Canadian parliamentary delegation was received at the residence of Mr. Marc Lortie, Canada's Ambassador to France, for a briefing session. Mr. Lortie was assisted by a number of Embassy officials.

Following the usual formalities, the Chair presented to the Ambassador the objectives of the Standing Committee meeting, which were to propose a draft program to the French party for the Association's 37th Annual Meeting, which, if accepted, will be held in Alberta (Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray and Banff) in late August-early September 2010. Apart from the working themes that remain to be determined, the stay in Alberta would afford the opportunity to acquaint delegates with the Franco-Albertan community and the boom in French investments in the province, particularly in the energy sector: gas and oil sands. The Ambassador was very much in favour of the idea, noting that France would shortly be opening an economic consulate in Calgary and that very significant French investments are expected in the energy sector in the next few years. He suggested that, having regard to the quite negative attitude in France toward development of the oil sands, an effort should be made to alter French perceptions by demonstrating Canada's new carbon capture technologies and other innovative alternative energies being developed in Canada. He also pointed out the pronounced interest of French public authorities in the Arctic: France's former Prime Minister Michel Rocard has been appointed by President Sarkozy to manage this issue both in France and in Europe. Mr. Rocard will be coming to Canada between April and June 2010 to attend a seminar to which the Inuit and Cree of Nunavut, in particular, will be invited.

Ambassador Lortie outlined the political and economic situation in France, unemployment is still high at 9.8%, public finances have deteriorated, economic recovery is still tentative and the government's popularity in the polls is low. The polls also indicate that there is not much opposition to the President's majority, but, on the left, among Strauss-Kahn, Martine Aubry, François Hollande and Ségolène Royal, no one appears to be resolutely taking the lead. The national identity debate has divided both left and right. The outcome of the regional elections in March could well reflect the

disenchantment of the majority of French citizens with the government, and the polls show that the right could lose the only two regions, out of 22, that it currently controls. France will be hosting the G-8 and G-20 after Canada in 2011.

Going back to Canada-France relations, Ambassador Lortie emphasized the vigorous scientific cooperation and the advanced state of Canada-European Union free trade negotiations, for which 21 negotiating tables have been established in sectors such as tariffs, public markets and investment. He noted that the private sector and the provinces were involved in the process.

In the matter of St-Pierre-et-Miquelon (SPM), the Ambassador informed the delegation that a bilateral working session had been held in November 2009. Ultimately, what SPM is seeking is increased cooperation with the Atlantic Provinces, more Canadian investment, more tourism, and the establishment of an office in Montreal. It was in that context that the Notice of Filing with the UN of a claim respecting the continental shelf in the SPM area, which claim was actually filed with the UN on May 13, 2009, had to be seen. That notice concerned an appeal from the judgment of the Court of Arbitration rendered in Canada's favour in 1992. No further action has been taken since the notice was filed. In the Ambassador's view, cooperation between SPM and the Atlantic Provinces is good and getting better with investment in fisheries, health and education.

Another topic addressed by the Ambassador was youth mobility between the two countries. In that issue, Canada is seeking equal treatment for Canadians wishing to travel to France: numerical reciprocity and reciprocity of opportunity. This year, 14,000 French citizens will study or are on traineeships in Canada, compared to only 3,000 Canadians who will be students or trainees in France. The central factor in this imbalance is a tax (between 70 and 1,600 euros) charged to French corporations wishing to hire Canadian trainees. The tax is clearly unfair from the Canadian standpoint, and negotiations should be undertaken so that Canadian trainees can be hired in the same way as French and European trainees, that is without taxation. Young French citizens wishing to come to Canada obtain a 12-month work permit involving no further control, and the \$150 participation fee charged is refundable.

The delegation was then received at luncheon by Ambassador Lortie, who had also invited three French media personalities for the occasion: (1) Mr. Gael Sliman, Assistant Director General of BVA, a polling firm; Mr. Dominique Reynié, Director of the think tank, FONDAPOL; and (c) Mr. Pascal Perrineau, professor at the Institut d'études politiques de Paris. They by turns outlined the political situation in France and answered questions from parliamentarians.

(b) Audience with Mr. Éric Besson, Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidary Development

In the afternoon, the delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Lortie, went to the Department of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidary Development. There the delegates had the great privilege of being received by Minister Éric Besson, whom President Sarkozy had appointed to lead the Great Debate on National Identity in France. Chair Claudette Tardif stated, by way of an introduction, that the national identity debate in France had been watched with considerable attention in Canada,

particularly since similar questions had been asked about certain aspects of Canadian and Quebec multiculturalism and interculturalism policies.

Minister Besson outlined the philosophy behind the French approach to immigrant integration. France, a land of immigrants, has chosen the path of integration and assimilation: immigrants become French citizens only if they abandon part of their personal history. The main risks to national identity are individualism and communitarianism, which are the negation of the republican assimilation dream.

With respect to the national debate he has led, the minister believes that it has made it possible to say who the French are and what their values are. It was a delicate exercise. After getting off to a good start, the debate was influenced by racist outbursts, the Swiss vote against minarets, the fears of a minority of French citizens who associate Islamism with terrorism, and so on. In reality, according to the minister, the majority of French citizens are open and tolerant and want France to remain a country of immigration and integration in a manner consistent with the country's law and customs. He stated that even youths of diverse origins are quite strong in their opposition to communitarianism.

Minister Besson provided delegates with a document containing 14 proposals from the Government Seminar on National Identity held in Matignon on February 8, 2010. Some of the measures included: (a) the creation of a young citizen booklet; (b) reinforcement of the role of schools in building the civic awareness of young generations; (c) providing the children of France with the opportunity to sing La Marseillaise once a year; (d) the obligation to have the French flag in every school and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in every classroom; and (e) strengthening the authority of teachers.

The minister noted that the debate was not intended to lead to any uniting, consensual measures. The debate in itself had value, but the regional election campaign had stopped it. However, the minister added, it would be resuming because President Sarkozy still believes in it.

MP Paule Brunelle said there must be a balance in the rights and duties of immigrants. In Quebec, the proceedings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on reasonable accommodation resulted in practical recommendations, but they have not been accepted by the Government of Quebec to date. She wondered about the need for legislation to prohibit the burka. The minister acknowledged that that issue had come up in the identity debate, but that it also concerned another matter, the dignity of men and women, the equality of men and women, secularity and the fear of Islam. That is why a *Parliamentary Resolution* had been considered, instead of an act that would absolutely prohibit the wearing of the burka in public places. In this controversy, the minister was struck by the messages from women from the Maghreb, in particular, against the burka. Veiling is on the rise in Morocco and Tunisia. There are approximately 2,000 veiled women in France, but that number is increasing.

The Canadian delegation thanked Minister Besson for his remarks, which shed light on this difficult issue, and for taking the time to organize the meeting despite a very heavy schedule. The delegation gave the minister a copy of the new federal government document intended for immigrants, entitled *Discover Canada: The Rights and*

Responsibilities of Citizenship. Minister Besson, who has often come to Canada, said he intended to return in the next few months.

(c) Working Meeting at the Department of Finance

The delegation travelled to the headquarters of the Department of Finance in Bercy for a working meeting on the public deficit in France. The presentation was made by Mr. Claude Wendling, Deputy Director, Budget Directorate, who is responsible for the special public investment program. Mr. Wendling reported on the First Session of the National Conference on the Deficit, which was held at the Palais de l'Élysée on January 28, 2010.

France has had 30 years of continuous deficits, always greater than 2% of GDP and the average deficits of the Euro Area. The recent financial and economic crisis has only increased the deficits of the economies of all the developed countries, and France has been no exception. The public debt rose from 21.1% in 1976 to 83.2% in 2010. On the revenue side, France has much higher taxes than its partners. Expenditures also run much higher than average for the Euro Zone: nearly 55% of GDP in 2009, 15 percentage points higher than in the early 1970s. While government spending as such has risen appreciably in the past 10 years, social security expenditures (pensions, health care, employment insurance, family benefits, etc.) and transfers to local communities have increased even more sharply. As a result, over the decade, the French public service has declined in numbers, while the number of local and hospital sector officials has grown very significantly.

These analyses have led to the creation of a task force to refine the diagnosis, to reflect on national and territorial spending standards, to give consideration to the idea of entrenching balanced public finances in the Constitution, to review all health expenditures and to design an action plan to cut government spending.

Mr. Wendling emphasized the dangers of runaway public spending, as may be seen in the current situations of Greece and Spain. He added that, in political terms, and even at the Department of Finance, little concern has been given to the public debt. The issue was raised for the first time by a candidate, François Bayrou, during the 2007 presidential election campaign. Mr. Wendling explained that the French want services but also less taxation.

Citing the example of Canadian government budget reform, Mr. Wendling acknowledged that that was a model, but that there were limits to importing Canadian solutions, particularly in the social field. On the whole, the French are satisfied with their welfare state. Fifty percent of French citizens do not pay taxes. And President Sarkozy has previously stated that he will not raise taxes and will even try to lower them, except for certain wealthier social categories. In conclusion, he noted that the social communities do not service the debt and are not affected by the retirement issue, two central government responsibilities. The delegation Chair thanked Mr. Wendling for a very interesting presentation on France's public finances.

(d) Information Session on St-Pierre-et-Miquelon

The delegation visited the Ministère de l'Outre-mer (department of overseas departments and territories) for an information session on St-Pierre-et-Miquelon.

Mr. Richard Têtu, Minister-Counsellor, Political Affairs, from the Canadian Embassy, accompanied the delegation. In that capacity, Mr. Têtu was the liaison with France's Department of Foreign Affairs on issues concerning St-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Also in attendance were a number of senior officials from the Ministère de l'Outre-mer, including the minister's diplomatic advisor, Mr. Gilles Huberson.

Two French parliamentarians representing St-Pierre-et-Miquelon were also present: Deputy Annick Girardin and Senator Denis Detcheverry.

Senator Detcheverry opened the session by noting that an agreement had been reached between SPM and the Atlantic Provinces. He would like that agreement now to be expanded to include Quebec and for a permanent office for the islands to be established in Montreal. He noted that SPM should be a showcase for France in North America. Recalling the cod dispute 20 years ago which led to a moratorium on the cod fishery, he added that, while Canada might have forgotten that episode, the citizens of St-Pierre still have not gotten over it. Noting that SPM is under-administered, he called for the establishment of a joint SPM/France and Canada office.

The senator recalled that institutional cooperation between Canada and SPM began in 1996, despite the doubts of island political authorities. Cooperation was apparently restricted to administrative relations, and SPM's elected officials did not want to sit on the institutions put in place, such as the Franco-Canadian Joint Commission, "sleeping beauty", as the senator called it. Since 2008, however, businesses have become interested, including the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Canada's economic development network will be invited to the Joint Commission.

Cooperation sectors have already been identified: cranberry processing, bison breeding and processing for a French clientele, computer-assisted language training, enhanced use of port infrastructure to welcome tourists, a casino, cruises, and so on. Recalling that, at the recent États généraux de l'Outre-mer (estates general on overseas departments and territories) in France, the French government had made a commitment to assist the overseas departments and territories, the senator expressed the hope that Canada and SPM could take advantage of those opportunities, but promising options and projects should be determined quickly. SPM would also like to have an agreement with Canada on waste recovery as 90% of its waste results from products purchased in Canada. Agreements on marine rescue and the certification of seafood products are also desired, but negotiations in those areas are already going well. Two other areas that should be explored are standards and scientific cooperation. Student exchanges are another field where cooperation efforts should be made. As the islands have no university, undergraduates from SPM study in Newfoundland, Quebec, Moncton and Montreal. However, there is no social safety net agreement between the two countries for those students which would be eminently desirable.

The Chair of the Canadian delegation, Senator Claudette Tardif, thanked participants for the information session, acknowledging that the problems raised were entirely unknown to her and that they involved numerous levels of government in both France and Canada. If the Association could assist through solidarity, she concluded, it would do so in a manner consistent with the jurisdictions involved.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

(a) Visit to the Renault Plant in Flins

In the morning of February 16, the Canadian delegation went to Flins, in suburban Paris, to visit the headquarters of a Renault plant manufacturing the Dacia, Lada, Clio and Renault-Samsung models.

An initial presentation was made by Ms. Véronique Dosdat, Director of Financial Institutional Relations, on Renault and the crisis, an overview of government assistance.

In 2009, Renault produced 2,309,188 vehicles around the world but suffered losses of 3.060 billion euros. The Group has 121,000 employees. In North America, Renault is a partner of Nissan. Renault specializes in mid-range vehicles. Its Logan model, which is manufactured in Romania and sells for 6,000 euros, was aimed above all at emerging markets, but it has had considerable success in Europe as a result of the cash-for-clunkers policy.

In late 2008, Renault's financial position was as follows: a 45% decline in vehicle manufacturing and a 30% drop in sales. The Group needed 3.5 billion euros, and the French government granted it a loan of 3 billion million euros (over 6 years, at 6% interest), plus 500 millions euros. One-third of the loan was earmarked for sales financing. As a result of that assistance and the cash-for-clunkers program (up to 1,700 euros per vehicle), the company began to recover in 2009, except in Russia, Spain, the United States and Romania. A series of other tax measures (supplier support fund, elimination of the professional tax, research for construction of an electric vehicle, etc.) helped the business keep its head above water.

Ms. Dosdat admitted that government assistance had been challenged by citizens and certain political groups. Indirect support for the banks was also poorly received. However, the situation was justified as a result of the fact that the government is still a 15% shareholder in Renault, and, prior to 1994, held 55% of the Group's shares. The Renault Group believes that its future growth lies essentially in India and China.

Ms. Marie de Saint-Cheron addressed the delegation on Renault's plans to create a fully electric vehicle by 2011. This challenge depends on two factors: the alliance with Nissan and the company's bet that it can produce a popular 100% electric vehicle. In the long term, the objective is to occupy 10% of the market with this vehicle by 2020. Four billion euros will be invested. The target range for the vehicle is 160 km. The Renault Group is seeking government assistance for vehicle purchase and to offset the extra cost of batteries.

Following the presentations, the delegation visited the Renault Clio stamping and assembly workshops.

(b) Luncheon at the Senate hosted by the Groupe d'amitié France-Canada

Back in Paris, the delegation was received to luncheon at the Senate by the Chair of the Groupe d'amitié France-Canada, Marcel Pierre Cléach. In addition to Mr. Cléach, a number of other French parliamentarians were also in attendance: Senators Gisèle Gautier, Louis Duvernois, Joseph Kerguéris, Pierre-Yves Collombat,

Michel Guerry and Denis Detcheverry. Deputies Catherine Coutelle and Annick Girardin joined the group as well.

(c) Working Meeting on St-Pierre-et-Miquelon

A second working meeting on St-Pierre-et-Miquelon was held at the Senate with a number of senators and deputies attending the luncheon, joined by Senator Catherine Procaccia. Mr. Bernard Favre represented the Quai d'Orsay and Mr. Richard Têtu, Minister-Counsellor, represented the Embassy of Canada in France.

The working session was chaired by Senator Joseph Kergu ris, who pointed out that the Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delano e, had roots in SPM. He also set out the general framework for the discussion by saying that the future of St-Pierre-et-Miquelon was deeply rooted in the relations between Canada and the European Union.

At the outset, Senator Claudette Tardif stated that she and her delegation were delighted to continue the discussion begun the previous day on the future of the islands. In her capacity as a Canadian federal parliamentarian, she emphasized that the federal context made relations between Canada and SPM more complex. She and MP Paule Brunelle asked for more information on the historical context of the relationship and, in particular, on the fishing dispute.

First, Senator Detcheverry, senator from SPM since 2004, said that the dispute over the islands was first an issue with the French government (French fishermen) and then with Canada (cod war). The year 1992 was a turning point in history with the dispute over the delineation of the continental shelf and the moratorium on the cod fishery. These two disputes created genuine hostility between Canada and SPM and kept the islands in a situation of dependence on Paris.

Institutional cooperation was established through the Franco-Canada Joint Commission but did not go beyond administrative cooperation until 2004, with the start of economic cooperation with the Maritime Provinces. Senator Detcheverry would now like that cooperation to be extended to Quebec. In 2010, however, the senator believes that regional economic cooperation is now in neutral, for numerous reasons: lack of method, unclear Canadian expectations, the deferred creation of a cooperation office with one branch in Montreal and another in SPM, and other factors.

The status of the territorial communities such as SPM carries with it both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages, Senator Detcheverry noted, included the customs code, the tax code and direct relations with the Canadian provinces. On the other hand, there are no direct relations with the federal government. SPM is excluded from Canada-France-Quebec relations. However, the senator wondered, could the islands not be a meeting place? As for disadvantages, the senator emphasized that it is hard to imagine that Canada could have an interest in direct relations with SPM. Local elected officials are currently working on a project for a mission to Canada, for which the establishment of an office in Montreal is one of the objectives. And why could SPM not be a bridge between Quebec, Canada and Europe?

Deputy Annick Girardin offered a number of additional historical remarks about SPM. At the time of the "cod war", SPM was a mono-economy dependent on a single species (cod). The 1992 moratorium was essential, but it killed off the local economy. As a

result, from 1992 to 2007, elected officials did not sit on the Joint Commission. Ms. Girardin sat on the Commission for a while as an official.

With the recent crisis in Guadeloupe in 2008-2009, le Ministère de l'Outre-mer is now in the hot seat, hence the organization of the États généraux de l'Outre-mer, which produced a number of proposals, including making SPM a European bridgehead in North America. According to Ms. Girardin, the situation is conducive to increased economic cooperation, and the issue of the continental shelf and the extension of its boundaries is a secondary issue in her mind.

If SPM could attract 10 businesses with some 15 employees each, it would be saved. Under a future Canada-European Union agreement, SPM has a card it can play. If the aim of such an agreement for 2011 were considered too optimistic, Ms. Girardin nevertheless thought that SPM had only two years to make the necessary economic change and would be actively seeking economic partnerships during that time. Obtaining the rights to tranship Canadian exports to Europe would be one mutually beneficial avenue for cooperation. The other would be to make SPM a marine port of call.

MP Paule Brunelle explained that she was somewhat confused by these remarks. Why is the Joint Commission not working? Is the economic reconstruction of the islands Canada's responsibility or that of France? In her mind, the continental shelf issue was permanently resolved in 1992, and she did not see how putting it back on the table could help economic cooperation between Canada and the SPM.

Senator Kerguéris recalled that the Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, was in favour of greater cooperation between Quebec and France, as could be seen from recent agreements on the bilateral recognition of diplomas and qualifications. In his view, that recognition could be extended to Europe as a whole and to all the Canadian provinces.

Richard Têtu, Minister-Counsellor at the Embassy of Canada in France, said he was pleased with the debate. He recalled that the Joint Commission had been put in place to restore the economy. He also noted that Newfoundland suffered considerably from French and European over-fishing in the area. There are therefore matters to be resolved between France and SPM, and the Joint Commission can help with respect to cultural, economic and tourism cooperation and other matters. In Mr. Têtu's mind, dialogue is working well as far as Canada is concerned. In his opinion, creating an SPM office in Montreal is a good idea, but that is solely the responsibility of France. He thought it was unfortunate and unpleasant that France had issued the letter challenging the marine boundary settled by the 1992 decision.

Mr. Favre, representing the Quai d'Orsay, emphasized the importance of the Joint Commission's work, in which he himself was taking part. On the matter of the future Canada-European Union Free Trade Agreement, he recalled that it was an ambitious plan that went far beyond free trade.

Going back to the question of SPM and air and marine transport, it was noted that the airport needed to have a longer runway to accommodate wider-body aircraft. There are ports, but they do not meet current requirements, are under-developed, and some facilities have even been abandoned.

Senator Detcheverry returned to the idea of a "bridge between Canada and the European Union", for which everything remains to be done. He emphasized the need to upgrade port infrastructure. With regard to the memorandum of intent on the marine boundary, he suggested that the idea was more to wake up the French government than to shock Canada. The memo was designed as a life buoy for SPM and seems inconsistent with cooperation objectives within the Joint Commission. Deputy Girardin said she could not cite a single example of successful action by the Joint Commission. One participant pointed out that the inhabitants of St-Pierre-et-Miquelon had access to hospitals in the Canadian provinces, while another noted that that service would exist even without the Joint Commission.¹

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

(a) Working Meeting

A working meeting was held at the National Assembly in the morning. Four themes were on the agenda at the request of the French party: (a) the mobility of individuals; (b) student exchanges; (c) recognition of diplomas and qualifications; and (d) alimony payments. These issues represent a number of challenges or difficulties in the bilateral relationship between Canada and France, and that is why they were put forward. Present at the meeting were Messrs. Marc Laffineur, Deputy, Chair of the Association, Louis Duvernois, Senator, Rudy Salles, Deputy, Georges Colombier, Deputy, Joseph Kerguéris, Senator, Pierre-Yves Colombat, Senator, and Ms. Catherine Coutelle, Deputy. Mr. Favre from the Quai d'Orsay was also in attendance.

Senator Duvernois made a presentation on the issue of mutual recognition of diplomas. This issue has arisen as a result of the globalization of human resources, which raises problems with regard to language and qualifications. France has developed its position particularly in the context of the European Union and has signed community agreements with its neighbours based on certified technical and mutual bases. Some countries have imposed restrictive clauses. For third countries such as Canada, Quebec, there are various agreements. Quebec proposed an agreement with France, which was signed on October 17, 2008, including trades and professions. The exercise is difficult, however. This is an essentially political agreement. A monitoring secretariat has been put in place. To provide an idea of the complex nature of its implementation, Senator Duvernois cited, as an example, the case of physicians, who in France work in both the private and public sectors, whereas they belong to the public sector in Quebec. The legislative and regulatory vocabularies are different, which results in obstacles and difficulties. Senator Duvernois also cited the case of Quebec veterinarians, who automatically have North American accreditation, but that accreditation would not be granted to a French veterinarian who went to practise in the province. In addition, in France, French citizenship is required in order to carry on certain professions and

¹ Three documents were distributed to the Canadian delegation at the end of the meeting: (1) *Réflexion – SPM: pont entre l'UE et le Canada*, Memo by Denis Detcheverry; (2) Annick Girardin and Louis Guédon, deputies, *Le plateau continental étendu de St-Pierre-et-Miquelon: vers un nouvel espace de coopération*, Rapport d'information no. 1312, Commission des affaires étrangères, Assemblée nationale, 10 décembre 2008; (3) Annick Girardin, *Note: Dossiers de coopération régionale Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon-Canada, Assemblée nationale, 15 février 2010*.

trades. Another example is the status of midwives in Quebec and France. French veterinarians who teach in St-Hyacinthe, Quebec, are not entitled to practise. The same is true of French professors of medicine at the Université de Montréal.

Mr. Favre, from France's Department of Foreign Affairs, said that bridges would be created to enable Quebecers who are licensed to carry on their trade or profession in France to work in the European Union as well. Those bridges have not yet been built to enable French professionals accredited in Quebec to work in the other Canadian provinces. To resolve those difficulties, a follow-up committee has been struck to establish mutual recognition by the end of 2010 in order to adopt statutory provisions and related regulations to amend domestic regulations of the various professional orders concerned. Quebec is pushing for this, but it will take time. The professional orders often do not cover exactly the same fields in France and Canada. The Corporation des médecins du Québec, for example, distinguishes itself by its resistance, its protectionism. An additional difficulty is the existence of an Office des professions au Québec, which controls all other professional orders. The announcement of the France-Quebec agreement immediately caused considerable interest, as those concerned believed that its technical and operational implementation would be quite easy, but they have been disappointed. Senator Tardif cited, as an example, the difficulty Francophone professionals from the rest of Canada are experiencing in being recognized in western Canada. There is a lack of political will in this matter, despite the shortage of professionals in a number of fields.

In conclusion, the Canadian and French parliamentarians felt that this matter was a major issue that should continue to be monitored within the Association.

Involvement in bilateral student exchanges shows that, in 2008, 3,165 Canadian students studied in France and 9,000 young French citizens were registered in Canada. Canada would like to rebalance those figures. With respect to youth mobility, the Canada-France agreement establishing the Working Holiday Program in 2003 experienced a number of administrative problems, such as the charging of application fees, the difficulty involved in issuing visas and housing problems. In France, a business wishing to hire a foreign trainee may be charged a tax of between 60 and 1,600 euros, which is considered a program disincentive. Senator Jean-Claude Rivest explained that the program works very well between Quebec and France because of the program of the Office franco-québécois de la jeunesse. The fact that a relatively small number of Canadians who study in France can be explained by the fact that young Anglophones outside Quebec have more countries to choose from in order to do this, in particular the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Senator Duvernois informed participants that he would conduct a parliamentary follow-up on this matter with France's Department of Immigration.

The last issue was alimony. It concerned couples consisting of French and Canadian nationals who have separated or divorced and are not meeting their support obligations, thus putting families in precarious situations. Since 1996, there has been a signed agreement between the two countries on this matter. That convention has not been ratified due to the resistance of certain provinces, as the matter of support payments is a provincial jurisdiction. The convention must be ratified under provincial laws. Some provinces and France have agreements that are being complied with to varying degrees

(Alberta and Saskatchewan, in particular), but Quebec refuses to ratify the Franco-Canadian agreement, as it would prefer a direct agreement with France.

At the conclusion of this exchange, the two parties agreed to monitor this issue at future meetings of the Association.

The Canadian delegation was then received at luncheon at the Petit Hôtel de l'Assemblée nationale, chaired by Mr. Marc Laffineur, Chair of the Association.

(b) Themes and Program of the 37th Annual Meeting of the Association

In the morning, Senator Claudette Tardif presented a draft program for the 37th Annual Meeting to the parliamentarians, who were joined by Senator Marcel Pierre Cléach, Chair of the Groupe d'amitié France-Canada in the Senate. She suggested that the program be conducted in Alberta, her native province. The program would take place over seven days between August 28 and September 15, but Senator Tardif encouraged the French party to choose the first week of September because initial contact had already been made with various organizations on that basis. As the meeting would be held in Alberta, special attention would be paid to energy and environmental issues.

The delegates would arrive in Edmonton, the provincial capital, to begin working meetings in accordance with a two-day program. They would be received in the Legislative Assembly by its Speaker and would meet with ministers and representatives of the Francophone community.

The third day would be held in Fort McMurray and include a visit to an oil sands site.

From Fort McMurray, the delegates would then travel to Calgary for a two-day program involving further working meetings, in particular with French investors in Alberta.

Lastly, a one-day excursion would be organized to Banff.

Senator Tardif provided details on the involvement of persons who would be accompanying the delegations and gave assurances that French parliamentarians would be informed long enough in advance about the pass that would be required for that purpose.

At the end of the discussion that took place on the working themes that should be selected for the Annual Meeting, the following four items were agreed upon:

- (1) Energy and the environment - toward carbon-free energy?
- (2) Regulation of the financial sector in the context of G8 and G20 meetings
- (3) Franco-Canadian cooperation for reconstruction in Haiti
- (4) Institutional reform in France and Canada

The French party requested a period of two weeks in order to make a final decision on the meeting dates.

The evening ended for the Canadian delegation with a cruise on the Seine accompanied by two French parliamentarians.

Conclusion and Acknowledgments

The delegation wishes to thank the Standing Committee's organizers for its successful stay in France. It would also like to congratulate the organizers on the content of the proposed activities, with the emphasis on actual bilateral issues. In particular, it also wishes to thank Deputy Marc Laffineur, Chair of the Association, Senator Marcel-Pierre Cléach and Ambassador Marc Lortie for their time and thoughtful advice. The delegation would also like to thank the staff of the Senate of France, of the National Assembly and of the Canadian Embassy in Paris, and more particularly Messrs. Matthieu Meissonnier, Frédéric Slama, and Marc Berthiaume.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Standing Committee
DESTINATION	Paris, France
DATES	February 15-18, 2010
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Honourable Claudette Tardif; Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Paule Brunelle
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 17,084.15
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 5,654.40
HOSPITALITY	\$ 932.11
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,006.17
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 477.50
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 7.36
TOTAL	\$ 26,161.69