

Canada - France
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 37th Annual Meeting**

Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

**Edmonton and Calgary, Canada
August 29th to September 4th, 2010**

Report

From August 29th to September 4th, 2010, nine Canadian parliamentarians were in Alberta to take part in the 37th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association. Senator Claudette Tardif headed the Canadian delegation, which consisted of Senators Jean-Claude Rivest and Gérald Comeau, and Steven Blaney, Lois Brown, Paule Brunelle, Yvon Godin, Bernard Patry and Mario Silva, Members of Parliament. Serge Pelletier, the delegation's Executive Secretary, Jean-Rodrigue Paré, analyst, and Catherine Mathieu, coordinator, accompanied the delegation.

The French delegation was headed by Senator Marcel-Pierre Cléach, and consisted of Marie-Noëlle Battistel, Georges Colombier, Catherine Coutelle and Jacques Desallangre of the National Assembly, and Bertrand Auban and Joël Bourdin of the Senate. The French delegation was accompanied by Frédéric Slama, Executive Secretary of the France-Canada Interparliamentary Association, and Matthieu Meissonnier, Executive Secretary of the *Groupe d'amitié France-Canada* in the French Senate.

The Association's members would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Marc Berthiaume, Political and Parliamentary Attaché with the Embassy of Canada in France, and Robert Moulié, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of France in Canada who attended the Annual Meeting.

This report is divided into three parts. 1) The first is about the Association's meetings on the four themes chosen by the Executive Committee: energy and the environment; support for the reconstruction of Haiti; regulation of international financial markets; and institutional reforms. 2) The second is about the delegation's meetings with representatives of Alberta's Francophone communities. 3) The third is about the formal and informal protocol and courtesy meetings that the Association held while in Alberta.

1. WORKING MEETINGS

Working meetings are a key part of the Association's activities. They enable parliamentarians to address topics of common interest with a variety of perspectives and political dynamics specific to France and Canada. The parliamentarians can then convey the results of their fruitful dialogue to their respective chambers and their country's executive.

Given the decision by the Association's executive to hold this year's meetings in Alberta, the topic of energy and the environment, and its role in the debate on the development of the oil sands industry, accounted for a major share of the discussions.

Energy and the Environment

The Association's discussions on this topic were launched on the morning of the 31st of August with illuminating presentations from three energy experts at the University of Alberta's School of Business in Edmonton, followed by a presentation from a representative of the Rainforest Action Network. The plan was to continue the discussions the following day with a visit to Fort McMurray, but poor weather conditions

forced the aircraft to turn back. Nonetheless, the discussions resumed at a working meeting on Thursday, September 2nd, followed by a meeting with Alberta's Minister of Energy, the Honourable Ronald Liepert, and an information session hosted by Jean-Michel Gires, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian subsidiary of Total, a company based in France. In addition, on Friday, August 30th, the delegation received a presentation from the Pembina Institute.

Presentations at the University of Alberta

Professor Joseph Doucet began with a summary of key facts on the oil sands debate. He noted that, although the land mass where the resource is contained is immense, only about 3%, or roughly 500 km², can be exploited. This fact points to the actual value of Canada's oil reserves. Although Canada's reserves are the second-largest in the world after Saudi Arabia's, they are much less accessible. This increases extraction costs considerably. A barrel of Saudi oil costs roughly \$2 to \$3 to produce, while a barrel of oil from Canada's oil sands costs \$40 to \$60 to produce. Thus, the advantage of Canadian oil is its proximity to the US market (with the resulting reduction of transportation costs), the security of supply guaranteed by the deep political ties between Canada and the United States, and the close economic integration between the two countries.

Professor Doucet then discussed the difference between the open-pit mining method and the in-situ method. The open-pit mining method leaves a significant environmental footprint, primarily because of the settling ponds (tailings ponds) and the risks that these ponds pose to the ecological balance, notably on watercourses. In-situ exploitation leaves a much less significant impact on the land, but releases far more greenhouse gases due to the amounts of energy needed to liquefy the bitumen buried deeper underground.

Professor André Plourde's dynamic presentation placed the economic stakes of the exploitation of the oil sands in context. By virtue of the constitutional division of powers, the Government of Alberta owns the resource. It is therefore up to the provincial government to establish the tax and royalty system which enables private businesses to exploit the resource in the interest of Albertans. Professor Plourde explained that the pace of oil sands production is directly tied to changing oil prices and that this partly accounts for the 2009 slowdown following the economic crisis. He anticipates resumption of the pace in 2010 and 2011. The royalty system has attracted some criticism due to the spectacular growth of net exploitation profits having only translated into a moderate growth in royalties and fees for Alberta. However, the industry's economic impact is not limited to Alberta, since 20% of the impact on GDP, and 30% of the impact on employment, is felt outside Alberta.

Professor Selma E. Guigard's presentation followed. It focused on the technological developments that could limit the environmental consequences of oil sands mining in the future. The two main challenges are to reduce the amount of water that needs to be drawn from the Athabasca River, and to accelerate the settling of residue in the ponds. A significant amount of the water used to extract the bitumen from the sand cannot be recycled and is placed in settling ponds. The settling period is very long and the remaining water needs to be filtered before it can be reused, i.e. reintroduced into the

environment. Further research into both of these issues is needed in order to find sustainable technological solutions to these problems, which will only aggravate as the pace of production increases.

These three presentations were followed by a presentation by Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, who heads the Rainforest Action Network's Tar Sands Campaign. Based on recent research by Professor David W. Schindler, she discussed the adverse consequences of oil sands production on the health of watercourses, especially the Athabasca River. She also noted that the Fort Chipewyan First Nations communities, which are downstream from a large concentration of active sites, have had abnormally high cancer rates.

Working Meeting

Paule Brunelle, MP, started off the discussions with a presentation stressing the precarious balance between economic growth and respect for the environment. She questioned whether it is appropriate for the Government of Canada to support the industry's fast growth. Indeed, while Canada currently produces roughly 1.5 million barrels of synthetic crude oil per day, its production is expected to hit 3.3 million barrels per day in 2015. In her view, commensurate efforts have not been made to contain the effects of this growth on greenhouse gas production, and the Government of Canada seems more inclined to withhold relevant information on the release of toxic substances despite a statutory obligation to disclose such information. Thus, the Government of Canada is prioritizing economic growth with no regard for its environmental obligations, notably under the Kyoto Protocol. This, she said, explains why Canada has aligned its greenhouse gas reduction targets with those of the United States instead of adopting a robust environmental policy. Ms. Brunelle criticized the \$765-million federal clean energy development plan, noting that the largest share of this amount will be used to develop new carbon capture and sequestration technology instead of limiting emissions. She reiterated the Bloc Québécois' position that sustainable development requires a transnational fight against greenhouse gas emissions. In her view, the best approach is to create a carbon market.

Canadian MP Yvon Godin followed up with his own presentation, building on Ms. Brunelle's position that it is preferable to find ways to reduce emissions instead of capturing or sequestering those already produced. In his view, the pace of oil sands production should be slowed and the development of clean energy should be accelerated. He argues that development should be moderated until technology can keep its consequences in check.

The presentation by Catherine Coutelle, a member of France's National Assembly, aptly highlighted Europe's different perspective. In France, the development of renewable energy is well under way, and efforts are being made to diversify energy sources, notably to limit dependence on Russia. Following a major debate in French society called the "Grenelle Environment," the first phase of which was launched in 2007, a global ecological awareness has taken root in France. The only element on which consensus has still not been reached is the role of nuclear power in France's future. According to Ms. Coutelle, given the clear relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, the minimalist position common to the United States and Canada is disappointing. As the saying goes, "the cleanest energy is energy that is

never consumed,” so there should be more emphasis on energy conservation, especially in the building sector, where France is planning a 23% reduction by 2020. In order to stimulate solutions, governments can use both carrots and sticks. Carrots include tax incentives and new technology development, and sticks can include stringent government standards for new building construction, or a carbon tax. The economic crisis forced the French government to relax standards. The second phase of the debate in French society, called “Grenelle 2,” will assist with the concrete implementation of “Grenelle 1” commitments, but it is difficult to see how a true consensus on substantive issues can be reached as long as the issue of nuclear energy is not tackled head on.

During the ensuing discussions, Mr. Desallangre, a member of France’s National Assembly, expressed relative optimism regarding the striking of a balance between economic development and the environment. He noted, however, that it is the political actors who are responsible for translating commitments into priorities. In his view, there is a somewhat broad consensus in France, but it is not always reflected in the government’s priorities. Mr. Colombier, a member of the same chamber, expressed optimism following the substantive agreement towards implementing the Grenelle 1 accords. Their colleague Ms. Coutelle was more reserved, noting that it is difficult to change behaviour.

Canadian Senator Rivest asked the French parliamentarians to explain the European Union’s role in defining national environmental policies. Several French parliamentarians addressed this issue; they concluded that Europe adopts directives agreed upon in advance by the Ministers, and that, once Europe adopts these directives, each state is responsible for implementing them. Each European state thereby attempts to respect these objectives through their own national laws, although adapting them to suit the realities of their country.

A debate ensued after Canadian Senator Comeau argued that provinces benefiting from equalization payments are hardly in a position to criticize Alberta’s oil sands industry, given that Alberta’s contribution to the equalization system is directly linked to the oil sands. Mr. Godin responded that, regardless of interprovincial disputes, there is a global responsibility for the environmental consequences of Alberta’s oil industry, and policymakers need to be concerned about the industry’s repercussions.

Canadian MP Dr. Bernard Patry wondered whether Total’s significant participation was a concern for French parliamentarians. Ms. Coutelle stated that Total is first and foremost a multinational company whose attachments to France have weakened over time. French Senator Cléach suggested that feelings of attachment and national pride still exist, but expressed the hope that the extraction process will produce less pollution in the future. Mr. Desallangre said that he is not too worried about the repercussions of Total’s oil sand investments in France. Mr. Colombier agreed, and added that the globalization of companies should not cause them to abandon their social responsibilities. French Senator Bourdin was much more enthusiastic about Total’s international strategy, but stressed the importance of complying with environmental regulations.

Lastly, French Senator Auban informed the parliamentarians that a new explosion had just taken place in the Gulf of Mexico. Ms. Coutelle responded that it usually takes a crisis to raise people's awareness of issues.

Meeting with Alberta's Minister of Energy

The Honourable Ronald Liepert, Alberta's Minister of Energy, warmly welcomed the parliamentarians and went over the main points of his province's energy policy. He stressed his view that a strong Alberta supports a strong Canada. He placed great emphasis on the interprovincial partnerships (highlighting the similarities between Albertan and Quebec positions) and the way these partnerships strengthen the federation. He also noted that most of the infrastructure is from Ontario and Quebec and that the demand for labour benefits Canada as a whole. He asserted that the equalization system illustrates Canadian values of fairness in wealth redistribution and that Alberta is a net contributor to the equalization program.

Ms. Brunelle congratulated Albertans on their economic success. She then asked the Minister for his reaction to pressures by environmental groups for more stringent regulations. The Minister said that he does not like imposing anything on anyone, and that too many things tend to be imposed in this country. As for the environmental groups, he feels that they sometimes lack balance and that their representations are needlessly sensationalistic. However, he acknowledges that Alberta needs to make progress and improve its environmental performance.

Dr. Patry then asked the Minister for his reaction to Prof. Schindler's new study. The study found high pollution levels in the Athabasca River, and the Premier responded to it by calling for a more thorough investigation. Dr. Patry asked the Minister how Alberta intends to reduce the energy consumed by in-situ production. With respect to Prof. Schindler's study, Minister Liepert clarified his Premier's position by stating that he made a commitment to ask the research teams to work together in order to agree on conclusions that might be made jointly. With respect to in-situ production, the Minister noted that this kind of production was not viable 10 years ago and that technological advancements have improved its performance. In addition, he said that the low price of natural gas, which is used as the primary energy source for in-situ production, is not fostering innovation.

Mr. Colombier asked the Minister about the status of the approvals that Total is awaiting in order to be able to start up its projects. The Minister responded that he was not at all worried about Total's ability to comply with the standards, but that Total might be finding the slow pace of the approval process somewhat frustrating.

On behalf of the delegation, Senator Comeau thanked the Minister for his sincerity and for Alberta's contribution to Canada's economy.

Information Session Held by Total

Jean-Michel Gires, President and CEO of Total E&P Canada Ltd., hosted the delegation at the company's Calgary office. After going over the history of Total's oil sands involvement, Mr. Gires explained the strategic importance of Canada's reserves. Without the oil sands, world oil reserves would enable the current pace of production to

continue for the next 50 years. The largest share of these reserves is in the Middle East, a region to which private companies have no access. The inclusion of Canada and Venezuela's oil sands in the world's reserves adds 20 years of production in a far more favourable political and commercial setting. As the world's conventional crude oil reserves diminish, the strategic importance of the oil sands will increase. Canada's oil sands are expected to account for 8% of the world's production by 2030, and a much higher percentage thereafter, as the number of years of conventional oil reserves continues to dwindle.

Mr. Gires condemned the oil sands industry's negative press coverage and questioned the sincerity of the motives behind the approach of certain environmental groups, which, he says, resort to sensationalism in order to manipulate public opinion.

He then discussed three of Total's projects in Alberta: the Surmont in-situ project, the Joslyn mining project, and the upgrading plant to be built near Edmonton. The Surmont site, which has been operating since 2007, will quadruple its current production of 27 000 barrels per day by 2015 thanks to a technology called steam-assisted gravity drainage (SAGD). This technology leaves a limited footprint on the land because settling ponds are not required. However, it consumes more energy and therefore produces more greenhouse gases. As for the Joslyn project, which is entering the final approval phase, it is expected to begin production in 2017, at which time it will cover roughly 70 km².

Mr. Gires also deplored the continuing uncertainty as to the regulatory regime that will govern greenhouse gas emissions, and concluded his remarks by reiterating the importance of dialogue between industry partners with a view to limiting the cumulative effects of oil sands production. He also assured the parliamentarians that every effort is being made to involve local communities and First Nations in development plans. He noted that, in 2008, more than \$4,000,000 was invested in various community support programs.

During the question and answer period, Senator Rivest noted that the public is concerned that the industry wants to accelerate production before technological solutions are put in place to limit its environmental consequences.

Mr. Gires responded that the industry has been the victim of a media manipulation on a massive scale, expertly orchestrated by environmental organizations. He acknowledged that efforts remain to be made to attenuate the impact of settling ponds.

Ms. Coutelle rejected any suspicion of manipulation, arguing that the facts underlying the public's concerns have been confirmed by scholars whose credibility is not in question. She stressed the wisdom of resisting what she calls [translation] "Alberta's oil euphoria."

Senator Cléach asked why Total was unable to set the facts straight in its own information campaign. Mr. Gires said that his company needs to do more.

Dr. Patry wanted to know more about the budgets allocated to new techniques for storing and sequestering carbon, given the large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, especially from the in-situ projects. Mr. Gires answered that Total would be devoting a sum of \$900 million to these techniques. He mentioned the Lacq project, in

France, where 120 000 tonnes of CO₂ will be buried in a decommissioned natural gas reservoir. Mr. Gires noted that the technology is still experimental and that the costs of capture are very high, while also pointing out the lack of public funding.

Mr. Godin expressed concern about what is happening to the Athabasca River and its tributaries. He said that this is not a matter of being against the industry itself, but simply a matter of striking the proper balance between the need for economic development and environmental protection. Mr. Gires acknowledged the merits of NGOs but said that it is difficult to dialogue with them.

Senator Bourdin asked what the oil price needs to be in order for the industry to be profitable. Mr. Gires responded that it takes a \$US80/bbl price point for oil sands exploitation to make sense.

Presentation by the Pembina Institute

On behalf of the Pembina Institute, Terra Simieritsch gave a presentation focussing on the federal government's responsibilities and on the repercussions of oil sands exploitation on people, animals and the boreal forest. She confirmed much of the information that the parliamentarians had been given over the course of the week, but took a much more critical look at Ottawa's inaction on greenhouse gas emissions regulation. In addition, she showed that the production objectives initially slated for 2020 had been reached by 2004, noting that this could account for the difficulties in managing the environmental aspects of such rapid growth. She also questioned whether the industry is making any real efforts to reclaim and restore sites affected by mining operations. Although the industry claims that 13.6% of mined land has been reclaimed, certifications have only been given for 0.2% of that land.

Parliamentary and Civil Service Reform

The working meeting on this topic was held on the morning of August 30th in Edmonton. Senator Rivest outlined the institutional reform initiatives in Canada. In his view, these projects have yielded little concrete change. The Senator went over the major principles of Canada's federal constitutional monarchy, in which the convention of responsible government is duplicated in the constitutional distribution of powers between the provinces and the federal government. In the minority government context, which has prevailed for the last few years, it is difficult to make controversial decisions that could cause the government to fall if it loses the confidence of the House of Commons. Senator Rivest presented the current proposals to change representation in the House of Commons, noting the underrepresentation of Western Canada and the problems related to the potential dilution of Quebec's representation. He then presented current bills that seek to reform the way in which senators are appointed and to limit their term to eight years. In his view, the rigidity of the constitutional amendment formula makes Senate reform projects rather difficult to execute.

Next, Senator Cléach presented the major constitutional reforms adopted in France in July 2008, notably the reform giving Parliament closer oversight in relation to Presidential powers. In the Senator's view, these reforms are to some extent Americanizing the French system, in part due to the President no longer being able to hold office for more than two consecutive five-year mandates. Another reform gives the

parliamentary opposition more say over the executive's exercise of exceptional powers in the event of a crisis. Furthermore, Parliament will exercise more supervision over appointments to the most important positions, with the exception of state company presidencies, which are excluded from this reform. Lastly, Senator Cléach described how the reforms instituted since 2008 have enabled Parliament to take back some control over its agenda; it had largely lost that control following the adoption of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic in 1958.

In the ensuing discussion period, Ms. Brunelle argued that it is unacceptable for the percentage of Quebec's seats in the House of Commons to diminish. Ms. Coutelle then asserted that the constitutional reforms have not resulted in any true counter-powers for Parliament. Mr. Colombier responded that one has to allow some time for the new rules to translate into new parliamentary practices.

The Canadian and French Commitment to the Reconstruction of Haiti

Canadian MP Mario Silva's presentation focused on the scope of Canada and France's commitments. At the conference held in New York on March 31st, 2010, the international community pledged to spend US\$5.6 billion over the course of fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The largest share of this would be paid to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund, managed jointly by international organizations and the Haitian government. Last July, the two co-chairs of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, Jean-Max Bellerive and Bill Clinton, expressed concern that only 10% of the promised amounts had actually been paid. In reaction to this news, the Government of Canada confirmed its \$400-million commitment, to which it will add \$110 million as a result of its promise to match individual Canadians' donations to charities. To date, just over \$150 million of this \$510 million has been paid, either under direct bilateral agreements with the Haitian government, or as contributions to NGOs. So far, no money has been paid into the Haiti Reconstruction Fund.

France has expressly chosen not to provide its support to Haiti through the Haiti Reconstruction Fund, to which it will pay only one million euros. Consequently, France's financial support, which will total US\$245 million in new money, will essentially be provided under bilateral agreements and as contributions to NGOs on the ground in Haiti.

Mr. Colombier reiterated France's commitments in the wake of this terrible tragedy, which claimed 250,000 lives. He praised the French authorities' rapid mobilization immediately after the earthquake and the French government's support of efforts by the Red Cross in the weeks following the quake.

The ensuing discussion focused on whether it is appropriate to provide assistance pursuant to bilateral agreements instead of coordinating assistance through an independent agency that can ensure a more coherent approach while respecting the Haitian government's priorities. The parliamentarians in attendance acknowledged that a central agency is better able to ensure coherent action, but that political imperatives within donor countries do not always lend themselves to such an approach. Dr. Patry raised the issue of family reunification but noted that the operations in this regard concern a few hundred families at most.

G-20 Negotiations on Regulation of Financial Markets

Following are excerpts from Dr. Patry's presentation, which launched the discussions on this topic:

The financial crisis that has affected our economies over the past few years has had consequences for the financial security of all citizens of the countries affected. Hundreds of billions of dollars have gone up in smoke because it was realized too late that these billions really only existed in a virtual world. Hundreds of thousands of real people lost their real jobs. Hundreds of thousands of families lost their homes because they mistakenly thought that the houses belonged to them.

Faced with this situation, states had to react rapidly and inject billions of dollars, taken, once again, from the pockets of their taxpayers, in order to refloat their economies, which had run aground because of an excessive taste for risk fuelled by the promise of obscene profits. Taxpayers, the people who elect us, have paid twice, and they won't forgive us for another failure. As an elected official, my duty is to make sure that we never lose sight of the fundamental and very simple objective of all these discussions: protecting consumers.

The most important measure is the creation of a Financial Stability Board that will be in some sense the financial equivalent of an early warning system for natural disasters. First and foremost, the FSB will monitor states' capacities to anticipate the macroeconomic risks brought on by major movements of capital. Up until now, they have been unable to predict that the very aggressive actions of highly speculative funds could have repercussions on the economy as a whole. That is why, from now on, all financial institutions, whatever their nature or sector of activity, will have to be regulated and monitored. Financial institutions will also need sufficient cash reserves, that is, available money that belongs to them.

In Europe, three measures adopted by the G-20 were considered a great achievement:

- Stricter frameworks for executive bonus and compensation schemes in order to make executives more conscious of their social responsibility;
- Sanctions on "uncooperative jurisdictions," i.e. delinquent states whose actions can nullify the combined efforts of all the others;
- Stricter standards on rating agencies to prevent conflicts of interest.

We will now have to see whether all these measures have the expected result. When the crisis resolves itself, it will be very difficult for governments and parliamentarians to maintain the same intensity of interest in the problem. This is why I feel that our role as parliamentarians in coming years will be to listen to the Financial Stability Board's recommendations and to bring our respective governments to order if they do not appear to be taking these recommendations seriously enough.

Senator Bourdin then gave a presentation on European monetary policy. He reiterated how hard it is to set a joint monetary and budget policy when national differences are so significant. These differences are not limited to the specific economic situation of each European state; there are also country-specific points of view on the best way to combat

the effects of the economic crisis. In this respect, the European Central Bank is condemned either to impotence, if it cannot adopt vigorous measures, or to a loss of legitimacy, if it adopts vigorous measures that are certain to have a more negative effect on some countries than on others. The EU member states have nonetheless found a consensus on “convergence criteria,” that is, deficit and debt reduction targets that governments can use as guidelines. These targets were set at 3% of the GDP for deficits, and 60% of the GDP for debt.

The discussion that followed the presentations dealt mainly with the consequences of the crisis on the capacity of households to save. French MP Coutelle contrasted the apparent Anglo-Saxon propensity for overindebtedness with the apparent French propensity for oversaving. Senator Bourdin replied that the law somewhat limited the risks of excessive household debt, while Spanish policies, for example, favoured easier access to homeownership, causing private debt to rise. In short, everything depends on national priorities and traditions. One thing is certain: French households’ savings rates are made possible by the government’s social safety net. If vigorous fiscal consolidation measures are adopted in the public sector, an increase in private debt can be expected to result.

2. MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALBERTA’S FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES

Visit to the Cité francophone d’Edmonton

On Monday, August 30th, the delegation was welcomed to the Cité francophone d’Edmonton by its Chairman of the Board, Denis Magnan. Daniel Cournoyer, Artistic Director of L’Unithéâtre and member of the Cité francophone’s board of directors, went over the history of the Centre, looking back on the epic struggles of Alberta’s Francophone communities to gain respect for their right to quality French-language services. The French parliamentarians were pleasantly surprised at the vitality of Edmonton’s Francophone community. The delegation then visited the new rooms that have been built following the recent expansion of the Cité Francophone.

Reception at Campus Saint-Jean

Late in the afternoon of August 31st, the delegation was invited to a reception at the University of Alberta’s Campus Saint-Jean. The initial presentation was by Prof. Frank McMahon, who spoke on the history of the institution, describing the tribulations and successes of Edmonton’s Francophone community. Radio-Canada personality Ève-Marie Forcier then took over as Master of Ceremonies.

Campus Dean Marc Arnal emphasized the importance of maintaining the CBC’s regional French-language services. He also spoke of what he called “the political and social mission” that the Campus could play in shaping the vision of Canada in the West. Lastly, he proudly described the programs offered in French to some 700 undergraduates and 90 master’s-level students.

Dolorèse Nolette, president of the Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta, presented the organization’s priorities for action, notably plans to encourage Francophone immigration to Alberta.

Mr. Luketa M’Pindou, of the Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l’Alberta Society, spoke on the diversity of Alberta’s Francophones. He mentioned the special challenges requiring community action, notably getting support to combat violence against women.

Senator Bourdin presented a medal to the Dean of Campus Saint-Jean and expressed how pleased he was to see the renewal of Francophone life in Western Canada.

Finally, Senator Tardif, former Dean of the Campus Saint-Jean, was warmly applauded on her speech. With much emotion, she thanked the Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta and Campus Saint-Jean for their past and present struggles: [translation] “There is still a lot of work to be done in Canada and the world for La Francophonie, and I’m happy to be here at home, along with you today, so that we can share our love for this community.”

Reception at the Calgary Alliance Française

Late in the afternoon of Thursday, September 2nd, the parliamentarians attended a reception at the Alliance Française, with its president, Mr. Pierre-Yves Mocquais, along with representatives of the Francophone community and of the cultural and economic sectors, as well as French citizens living in Calgary. Members of the French and Canadian delegations were introduced, and informal discussions took place.

Presentation by Roy Klassen

On September 3rd, Mr. Klassen, a Francophone legal professional based in Alberta, outlined various elements of the Canadian justice system for the French parliamentarians. He is occasionally called upon to advise European businesses wishing to set up shop in Alberta. The business environment is generally favourable, but French businesses sometimes find it difficult to find their way through the particularities of common law – which occasionally overlaps with Quebec civil law – let alone the provincial and federal levels of government.

3. OTHER MEETINGS AND VISITS

Visit to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and meeting with Speaker Kowalski

The first morning of activities began with a visit to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The Honourable Ken Kowalski, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, warmly welcomed the delegation, noting the historic ties between Alberta and France, in particular the fact that more than 10% of Canadians who served in the Great War were from Alberta. Senator Cléach said how happy he was to visit Western Canada, which has strengths that are not well known in France. Senator Tardif thanked the Speaker for his welcome and for his unwavering support of Francophones in Alberta.

Visit to the Fort Edmonton Historic Site

On the evening of August 30th, parliamentarians had the pleasure of being invited to a reception hosted by the Honourable Ken Kowalski, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, at Fort Edmonton. During her speech, Senator Tardif thanked Speaker Kowalski for his welcome and noted the presence of the Honourable Hector Goudreau, Alberta’s Minister of Municipal Affairs and President of the province’s Francophone

Secretariat, and Wayne Cao, MLA for Calgary-Fort. She recalled the historical roots that have united Alberta and France since the time of the explorers and fur traders in the early 18th century, and the shared energy interests that bring them together today. Mr. Colombier and Senator Cléach expressed their pleasant surprise on discovering the vibrant Francophone life outside Quebec.

Meeting with Stephen Mandel, Mayor of Edmonton

Early in the afternoon of Tuesday, August 31st, the delegation was welcomed to the office of Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel. The Mayor explained the economic challenges facing the municipality, especially in the areas of housing and downtown safety. The parliamentarians were impressed by the municipality's balanced budget, which is attributable not only to the oil industry, but also to EPCOR, a wastewater treatment and utility company that is wholly owned by the City of Edmonton and nets the City an annual profit of roughly \$150 million. The delegation briefly visited the elegant City Hall before a photo session.

Visit to Edmonton Waste Management Centre

On the afternoon of Tuesday, August 31st, parliamentarians visited one of the most innovative recycling facilities in North America. Under pressure from a lack of space to bury its garbage, the municipality turned toward recycling in the mid-1980s. Today, roughly 60% of residential waste is recycled, and the target for 2013 and beyond is 90%.

Meeting on Albertan economic perspectives

On September 3rd, Doug Cameron, Senior Director, US Trade and Investment for the Government of Alberta, presented lesser-known facets of Alberta's economy. He reminded participants that the provincial economy is export-based, with revenues of \$118 billion, 88% of which are from the United States. Naturally, the main goal is to nurture economic growth related to oil sands development.

Advantages for businesses interested in establishing a presence in Alberta are the high education levels, the quality of the infrastructure, and a favourable tax system. Aside from the oil sector, Alberta's economic strengths are in information technology, nanotechnology, aerospace (drones and defence), agriculture and tourism.

Mr. Cameron stated that 80% of systems developed in Alberta for the aerospace sector are exported to the United States. This sector is very important and can be traced to the presence of four military bases in the province.

Lise Fenez explained that the Government of Alberta is emphasizing information technology as a way to diversify the province's economy and make it less dependent on the cyclical nature of the resource-based economy. The IT industry generated revenues of \$8.5 billion, roughly one-quarter of which are from exports.

Robert Kuperis, an economist with Alberta's Department of Agriculture, gave a presentation on the agricultural sector. Its revenues have reached \$10.2 billion, which is roughly 20% of all agricultural revenues in Canada. He described efforts under way to encourage free trade between the European Union and Canada in this sector.

Meeting with Representatives of French Companies in Alberta

Emmanuel Giry, Business Development Manager at Oxand Canada Inc., explained that French companies that wish to establish a Canadian presence almost always start in Quebec. He said that roughly 80% of French businesses with a presence in Canada have their principal place of business in Montréal. Constraints on interprovincial labour mobility sometimes make recruitment difficult, but there are more and more agreements in place.

Dinner at the Residence of Honourable Dan Hays, Former Speaker of the Senate of Canada

Early in the afternoon of Friday, September 3rd, the delegation was welcomed to the residence of the Honourable Dan Hays in Calgary for informal discussions.

SUMMARY OF THE 37TH ANNUAL MEETING

The 37th Annual Meeting was extremely busy. The discussions were very rich in content, and the meetings gave parliamentarians a much better idea of the stakes associated with oil sands exploitation. The meeting was also an opportunity, particularly for the French participants, to discover the little-known vitality of Alberta's Francophone community.

On the evening of Friday, September 3rd, the co-chair of the Association, Senator Tardif, capped the whirlwind week with the following remarks:

Dear Friends:

First let me repeat once again how happy your presence in Alberta, my home, has made me. This week has been an emotional one. I must thank you for your patience and kindness during our long and disappointing excursion above the unruly clouds of Fort McMurray.

Despite the disappointment, I think that I can speak for each and every member of our group when I say that the predominant feeling in our meetings and exchanges was friendship, the very sincere friendship that gives our association a warmth that other groups envy.

Our friendship for each other is also reflected in the quality and vigour of the discussions during our working sessions. Despite our very diverse political allegiances, we found unity in the profound values that we share, especially our sincere concern for the welfare of the citizens we serve as parliamentarians.

I am a little sad to be saying goodbye before you leave tomorrow morning.

Thank you again for being here. I wish all of you, dear friends from France and Canada, an excellent evening and a pleasant return home.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	37th Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Edmonton and Calgary, Canada
DATES	August 29 to September 4, 2010
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Claudette Tardif Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest Hon. Gérald Comeau
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Steven Blaney Mrs. Lois Brown Mrs. Paule Brunelle Mr. Yvon Godin Mr. Bernard Patry Mr. Mario Silva
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier, Executive Secretary Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré, Analyst Mrs. Catherine Mathieu, Coordinator
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 9,676.39
ACCOMMODATION	\$22,549.07
HOSPITALITY	\$20,099.81
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,813.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 2,794.89
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 1,901.18
TOTAL	\$59,834.34