

Canada - France  
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire  
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation in the Second Round of the  
French Legislative Elections**

**Canada-France Interparliamentary Association**

**Paris and Poitiers, France**

**June 14-17, 2012**

# Report

The Canadian delegation was comprised of the Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, Senator and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Group of the Association, the Honourable Serge Joyal, P.C., Senator, and the Honourable Marie-Paule Charette-Poulin, Senator. Executive Secretary Serge Pelletier travelled with the delegates. Marc Berthiaume of the Canadian embassy accompanied the delegation during its stay in the Paris area and in Poitiers. The Canadian delegation extends heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Marc 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 focused on the end of the second round campaign of the French legislative elections between eligible candidates after the first round that had taken place on June 10th, 2012. During its stay in Paris and Poitiers, the Canadian delegation met with a number of French parliamentarians, including two members of the Association, Senator H el ene Conway Mouret, President of the Groupe d'amiti e France/Canada at the Senate, and Catherine Coutelle, Deputy and candidate, in her Poitiers constituency, as well as Senator Herv e Maury, Vice-President of the group.

## June 14th, 2012

### a) Working meeting at the Canadian embassy

On Thursday, June 14th, the Canadian delegation was received at the Canadian embassy in France for a briefing on the political situation in France within a few days of the second round of legislative elections. Chantal de Chasteney, in charge of the Policy section, and Marc Berthiaume, in charge of parliamentary relations, gave a presentation.

Ms. de Chasteney was especially pleased with the involvement of the Canadian parliamentarians in the presidential and legislative elections, fostering as it did the creation of new networks of relationships with France's political parties.

Based on the results of the first round, Marc Berthiaume indicated that the results were positive for the Socialist Party (SP) and Fran ois Hollande. The challenge for the new president is to secure a majority in the National Assembly so that he does not have to negotiate with the miscellaneous left-wing partners. In light of the first round, that objective was still very likely. The current level of public support at 65% for President Hollande and his Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault is a good sign.

Mr. Berthiaume spoke of the embarrassing incident for the Left, a communication blunder, with the Twitter message in which President Hollande's partner expressed support for independent socialist candidate Olivier Farloni, the rival of S eol ene Royal, who was parachuted into the riding of La Rochelle with the support of the Socialist Party establishment. Other developments during the first round included: the withdrawal of Alain Jupp e from the Bordeaux race, Fran ois Bayrou's personal predicament in his constituency, ongoing support for the National Front, still the rival of the UMP, but sharing some of the same clientele. Marine Le Pen could be defeated by a Socialist candidate, but her niece had a good chance of winning.

Ms. de Chasteneau looked at what a socialist majority in the National Assembly meant for the relationship between Canada and France. Stephen Harper and François Hollande already had a cordial meeting at the G8 at Camp David, on May 18-19, 2012. She circulated a copy of the joint news release to parliamentarians. That meeting was in keeping with maintaining the bilateral relationship, with a focus on the economy. Various matters were brought up, including the situation in Mali (support for the mediation mission of the Economic Community of West African States) and in Syria (support for Kofi Annan's mission), the next G20 in Los Cabos (Mexico, June 18-19), Afghanistan, Libya, Iran, and the Canada-European Union free trade agreement. On the last point, Ms. Chasteneau recalled President Hollande's position in terms of reciprocity. As for France-Canada-Quebec relations, Ms. Chasteneau saw them in a positive light, regardless of the results of the legislative elections.

### **b) Working Lunch with French Experts**

Ambassador Marc Lortie invited three leading French experts to discuss the opportunities that lie ahead for France with a new president and with a possible leftist majority in the National Assembly: Éric Dupin, journalist, author of *La victoire empoisonnée*; Élie Cohen, economist; and Brice Teinturier, Acting CEO of the polling firm IPSOS France. Two French parliamentarians attended the lunch: Senator Hélène Conway Mouret (SP), President of the Groupe d'amitié France/Canada in the Senate, and Senator Hervey Maurey (Centrist Union), Vice-President of the group.

Mr. Lortie opened the lunch meeting by raising the Prime Minister of Canada's concern about the euro crisis. Senator Rivest, the head of the delegation, thanked Ambassador Lortie for organizing the working lunch and for his remarkable contribution to developing the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association and parliamentary diplomacy.

Brice Teinturier from IPSOS France opened the discussion by pointing out that social fractures have become more pronounced as a result of the euro crisis and the deficit, leading to negative feelings towards foreigners, the wealthy and the unemployed. He noted that the 2012 election results were the opposite of those of 2007. The National Front (NF) had an excellent showing in the first round of the legislative elections, its second best result ever after 2007. Based on recent polls, a simulation of the election results predicted a clear majority for the left and plurality for the SP. Mélenchon's Left Front might have no deputies. The Centre (Bayrou, Borloo) might disappear. Projections are estimating no more than three seats for the NF, at a disadvantage because of the electoral system. Abstention is still on a constant rise for the legislative elections, fuelled by the disenfranchised, dashed hopes, political impotence and the reversal of the electoral calendar focusing now on the presidential elections. On a different note, Mr. Teinturier stated that major French groups that are successful abroad are not well received in France because they are held responsible for relocations and unemployment. He also noted that Euro scepticism and anti-federalism were on the rise, but that there were no anti-German feelings as such.

Economist Élie Cohen addressed the euro crisis, just as Spain received assistance in the amount of 100 billion euro at a last chance European summit, but the euphoria on the markets was short-lived. The Spanish and Italian debts exacerbated what can only be called the 2009 growing chronic crisis, while long-term solutions were proposed to

short-term problems, such as a banking union, a joint resolution mechanism, euro bonds, but Germany is holding out. He noted that all those proposals are incompatible with European treaties, which should be revisited, but European politicians are refusing to go down that road for the time being.

Éric Dupin, the left-leaning journalist and writer, is the author of *Voyages en France* (2011) and *La Victoire empoisonnée* (2012), two unbiased field investigations. His prognosis is of a France marked by a sense of weariness towards modernity, social difficulties and the rejection of globalization. The French are suspicious and hostile towards each other. They were recently shaken up by the possibility of being downgraded on the market. Very politicized, they are extremely disillusioned at the same time. The people are so suspicious that they are wary of any political proposal right from the start. Even the left is divided, be it on globalization, free trade, immigration or integration. President Hollande will have to face this challenge. The two main parties, the SP and the UMP, are silent, for now, on major issues such as a more comprehensive European integration, tax increases or public spending cuts; they provide 6-month solutions rather than a long-term perspective. There is a total lack of transparency in terms of the future budget. Mr. Durpin believes that any reference to tax hikes will be rejected by the people. What kind of growth initiatives can be proposed in a deficit situation? Élie Cohen believes that all the economic conditions point to the federalization of Europe, but no one is ready politically. He adds that François Hollande is hyper-realistic, aware of his own limitations.

At the close of the luncheon, Senator Conway Mouret thanked the executive secretary of the Canadian Group for his 15 years of service to the Association. The opportunity has arisen for him to soon take up a new position in the Canadian Parliament.

## **June 15th**

### **a) Trip to Poitiers**

The Canadian delegation travelled to Poitiers to meet with incumbent MP Catherine Coutelle (SP), a great and faithful friend of the Association, and candidate for the 2nd constituency of the Vienne department. Greeted by Ms. Coutelle at the Poitiers train station, the delegation went on a guided tour of the city centre and made its way to the MP's head office, located in a working class neighbourhood where social housing is predominant. Ms. Coutelle was elected in 2007. With 47.32% votes in the first round compared to 26.96% for her closest opponent, Ms. Coutelle's re-election is practically guaranteed. The constituency has 114,141 people. (Ms. Coutelle ended up with 63.24% of the votes on election night).

Ms. Coutelle introduced her two staffers, Sébastien Aufort and Laurence Rault, and provided the parliamentarians with a folder about her department, including information on the population, businesses, legislative election documents, the results of the 2007 legislative elections, and maps. She explained how her office operates and how it is funded by the parliamentary allowance that she receives. Ms. Coutelle is a member of the Economic Affairs Commission of the National Assembly and she is interested in issues related to agriculture and fisheries, energy and industry, research, consumerism, domestic and international trade, customs, communication and tourism, regional and

urban planning, housing and the environment. She is also a member of the delegation for women's rights and equal opportunities for men and women. She belongs to various study groups on energy, the French abroad, economic intelligence, the Internet, broadcasting and information society, public and private partnerships, oil and gas peaks, population and development. With a unique mandate, Ms. Coutelle has distinguished herself in the Assembly through her consistent good work. Every month, she releases *Autrement – La lettre de Catherine Coutelle*, distributed to 6,000 constituents. Following the electoral reform introduced by former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the MP has felt that she was constantly conducting an election campaign and she has noticed voter fatigue.

Ms. Coutelle drew the delegation's attention to the first measures of President Hollande's five-year term, including a code of ethics for ministers, who are no longer allowed to hold more than one office, a decree reducing the remuneration of government members by 30%, reduction of ministerial offices, the return to the five-day week in elementary schools, rent control, and a boost to the minimum wage (SMIC).

Discussing the style of her campaign, she noted the importance of going back to the door-to-door approach, especially in the suburban areas of her constituency where people voted for the National Front out of fear of Islam and immigrants from southern countries, as well as their rejection of the euro. There is therefore a regional divide in her constituency between city people who vote for the Bourgeois-Bohemians (bobos) and the "poor" (up to 65% of families).

Ms. Coutelle invited the delegation for a working lunch at Nouaillé-Maupertuis, a small town of 2,825 inhabitants in the suburbs near Poitiers, where the beautiful Abbaye St-Junien is located. She invited her team members and local figures, including mayor Henri Bosq who distributed a document summarizing the challenges facing his community; Dominique Breillat, a law professor at Université de Poitiers and local political scientist; and Philippe Bonnay, a local journalist (Centre-Presse).

The mayor, Mr. Bosq, explained the population explosion in his town since 1970 – the population more than tripled in 40 years, an explosion due to the construction of a hospital and the development of the university halfway between Nouaillé Maupertuis and the city centre of Poitiers. This massive influx of former residents of Poitiers, young affluent professional households, led to a series of problems for the municipality: (a) excessively high land prices; (b) an increase in daily commutes from home to work in private vehicles between Nouaillé and metropolitan Poitiers; (c) the creation of a bedroom community where a sense of belonging and social life are absent; and (d) difficulty in identifying unifying elements among citizens. In fact, since 2008, many people have decided to return to the city because real estate prices are so high. The overall situation, fuelled by a general attitude of negativism and a rejection of politics, has helped the National Front gain ground in the municipality. The mayor concluded that, under the circumstances, even if a unifying theme did emerge, it would probably be rejected.

Journalist Philippe Bonnay focused his presentation on the emergence of the far-right and populist parties, not only in France but also in Germany and the Netherlands; those groups, even if they are established political parties, cannot and do not want to govern.

As for the National Front, Mr. Bonnay found that the party has been de-demonized by the new president Marine Le Pen and it now puts forward young people who make attractive candidates. He noted that Marine Le Pen was invited to Israel and that she affirmed secularism. In his view, those developments were obviously conducive to a reconciliation between the NF and the UMP. He also said that political debate no longer existed in France as it has been replaced by “screaming”.

Ms. Coutelle added that the parties are not working well. She gave her party as an example; the SP was crushed in 2007. But the Socialist Group, under the leadership of Jean-Marc Ayrault, president of the group, worked very hard to develop a political platform and, as a result, during the primaries in 2011, the SP had real debates. She noted the failure of civic education in French schools; whereas, in Germany, political education has been a success. From her experience, she feels that work in the National Assembly does not necessarily guarantee the local success of members. The public does not follow the work of the Assembly, though they show some interest in the committee proceedings. Senator Joyal explained the type of work done in the Senate compared to that in the House of Commons by giving the example of the Canadian bill on animal cruelty, which was significantly enhanced by the committee work done in the Upper House.

Turning to this campaign, Mr. Bonnay explained how challenging it is for the media to find an angle that interests the public. During presidential elections, the focus is on the personalities of the candidates. Many voters are content with just going to vote for the president; the rest does not interest them.

Professor Breillat, a constitutional expert, started a discussion on one of the issues in the legislative elections: will the left coalition have enough seats to make it possible to amend the Constitution – the amending formula requiring a 60% majority of the Congress of the French Parliament, at a joint session with the National Assembly and the Senate. Some of the measures proposed or anticipated by the Government, such as incorporating the “golden rule”<sup>1</sup> in the Constitution or extending the voting rights of immigrants to the municipal level, would require a meeting of the Congress.

After a short visit to the Abbaye de St-Junien, the delegation returned to the Regional Council in Poitiers, for a meeting with Senator Alain Fouché (UMP), member of the Canton de Chauvigny Regional Council. Lawyer by training, he became a senator in 2002, replacing Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who had been appointed Prime Minister. He was re-elected in 2004. In the Senate, he is a member of the Commission on sustainable development, infrastructure, equipment and regional planning.

From the outset, Senator Fouché predicted a majority for the Socialist Party after the legislative elections. But he said that some of the SP promises would not be kept, including retirement at the age of 60, a minimum wage (SMIC) increase, and growth measures. He noted that the new government had not announced any substantial changes for the economy since the presidential elections and that it was waiting to do so after the elections. In response to questions about the future of the UMP, he said that

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<sup>1</sup> The golden fiscal rule refers to a set of conditions likely to protect the annual balanced budget of a state or public authority. To ensure compliance per se, some feel that the rule must be a key legal provision and even be incorporated in the body of the Constitution.

the party is very organized – the legacy of the RPR – but that there are internal divisions between the two potential succession candidates, Mr. Copé and Mr. Fillon. He argued that President Sarkozy lost the presidential election because of his attitude and the way he rejected ideas. The party no longer wanted policies and legislation to be imposed. He recognized that Mr. Fillon is a unifying force, but Mr. Copé has a strong grip on the party. He hoped that President Sarkozy stays out of the succession at the head of UMP. As for the National Front, the Senator stated that its campaign agenda could not be fulfilled. He recognized that some of the right-wing UMP members could move closer to the NF. Commenting on the presidential and legislative campaigns, he said that everything was discussed with the exception of the real issues, such as employment and social justice. He gave the example of the debate on driver's licenses and demerit points. Demerit points cannot be challenged in France, but they can be bought back, which is why 500,000 drivers do not have licenses. The radar units across the country are money-making machines, although they are increasingly called into question everywhere else in Europe.

In terms of the political disengagement of citizens because of the negative image of politicians, Senator Fouché said that politicians are honest. But in this instance, the media dominates politics with their slogan: "they are all rotten". Furthermore, people no longer believe in promises and are increasingly resistant to the idea of social assistance. As for the anticipated defeat of Bayrou and the centrists, Mr. Fouché noted that the centre in France is the equivalent of the centre left, already taken by the SP. In terms of the euro crisis, the senator is straightforward: keep the euro as a priority, and conduct a general banking reform.

#### **b) Election Meeting with UMP candidates in Paris**

On its return from Poitiers, the delegation went to the Espace Cardin in the 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, for a meeting with the UMP candidates from the 18 Paris constituencies (note that the constituencies do not correspond exactly to the 20 arrondissements of Paris). The meeting was organized by Pierre Lellouche, the former Secretary of State for European Affairs and International Trade under President Sarkozy, himself a candidate. Former Prime Ministers François Fillon, also a candidate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> constituency, and Jean-Pierre Raffarin were the guests of honour at this end-of-campaign meeting. The Espace Cardin was packed with activists – approximately 1,000 people – who still believed in a potential victory of the right-wing in Paris, despite the weak results in the first round (31.83% for the UMP against 31.80% for the SP), but with a prospect of turning the weak votes from other centre or right-wing groups in favour of the UMP. Organizer Pierre Lellouche pointed out that Canadian Senators were in the room. Mr. Lellouche encouraged his troops to make more phone calls to voters and to continue door-to-door canvassing until the last minute.

The guests of honour and each of the candidates took the floor in turn, making speeches, at times very partisan, attacking the various measures proposed by the Hollande/Ayrault duo. Parisian Senator Philippe Dominati said that they had to fight and stand up to the socialists on issues such as public deficit and eliminating school on Saturdays. François Lebel, the UMP mayor of the 8th arrondissement, criticized the abstention rate – 40.27% in the first round. Another speaker criticized the decision of

François Bayrou (Modem – Centre) who announced that he was joining forces with President Hollande in the presidential election, thereby betraying the traditional Right/Centre alliance, which had been characteristic of the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic until then.

The 18 candidates took turns making short speeches. Philippe Gougeon, a candidate for the 12<sup>th</sup> constituency of Paris (49.87% of votes in the first round) stated that President Hollande had already gone back on what he stood for, mixing his private life with his public life. Mr. Gougeon was referring to the message posted by President Hollande's partner in support of a candidate other than Ségolène Royal in La Rochelle.

In his speech, Pierre Lellouche, a candidate for the first constituency (41.32% of votes in the first round), called President Hollande a president of broken promises, bungling, archaic measures and decline, referring to the policies to keep the 35-hour week, to go back to retirement at age 60, to increase taxes to address the public deficit, to bring into question educational freedom, and so on. He put the cost of announced measures at \$20 billion, which will lead to an increase in taxes and in debt. He was pleased that no socialists were elected in the first round in Paris, and that UMP candidate Claude Goasgen succeeded. He noted that, over the past few years, the right lost voters in big cities, with the exception of Nice. He concluded by praising the values of the right wing, specifically family and generosity. Later in a speech, he described the campaign as a campaign of fools, a bubble campaign. He criticized the SP policy seeking to restrict the RSA (active solidarity income)<sup>2</sup> implemented by President Sarkozy in 2008. He predicted that the following Monday, the day after the election, would be a day of disaster where the Greek government might collapse, which would lead to the breakup of the euro zone. He attacked the first fiscal measures taken by President Hollande – the increase of the minimum wage, an increase of the family school allowance, the hiring of new employees, the decree on the retirement plan that will cost \$20 billion euro, although growth was negative in the second half of 2012, and France's lack of a competitive edge. Mr. Lellouche felt that growth for President Hollande means growth in deficit and taxes. He called the Socialists autistic and arrogant, and criticized the French government's approach to isolate Germany in Europe.

Nathalie Fanfant, a candidate for the 20<sup>th</sup> constituency with 17.96% of votes in the first round, explained that she led an outreach campaign and that she was pleased that the Left Front lost. She pointed to the security issues in her constituency in particular, and in Paris in general and she blamed the City of Paris for that situation. She blamed President Hollande for his intention to eliminate juvenile courts.

Charles Beigbeder (8<sup>th</sup> constituency, 25.75% of votes in the first round) talked about the need to revitalize Paris, to relocate companies to the 12<sup>th</sup> arrondissement and to create housing. At the national level, he recommended that priority be given to the fight against unemployment, labour market flexibility by promoting employment contracts of

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<sup>2</sup> The revenu de solidarité active (RSA) [active solidarity income] is an allowance in France designed to ensure that its beneficiaries, whether they can work or not, receive a minimum income, and that, in return, they are responsible for seeking employment or developing and following a professional project that would improve their financial situation. 30% of recipients have a job and the RSA is a supplement.



indeterminate duration, increasing competitiveness by improving public spending. Finally, he blamed the Socialists for the anticipated bankruptcy of Greece, Italy and Spain.

Anne-Sophie Souhaité (9<sup>th</sup> constituency, 21.82% of votes in the first round) decried the Socialist Party value of “solidarity” that she related to the assistantship issue. She said that not all young people had to go to university and that she would encourage vocational and technical training instead.

Claude Goasgen (14<sup>th</sup> constituency, elected in the first round with 58.11%) noted that the government was saying nothing, and making extravagant promises, deluding the French, Parisians and Europeans. He attacked the bobos (the bourgeois-bohemians) who vote for the SP in the cities. He estimated an additional 38 billion euro being spent as a result of the retirement decrees and legislation, as well as other measures, which could only be funded by an increase in taxes. Finally, he urged non-participants to go vote.

Benjamin Lancar (5<sup>th</sup> constituency, 21.30% in the first round) was pleased about defeating the Left Front by eight points. He praised voluntary action in politics and made a commitment to fight against single activities and for a green economy.

Valérie Paparemborde (3<sup>rd</sup> constituency, 31.21% in the first round) focused her speech on young people. She said that equal opportunity was not the same as equality. She noted that 80% of high school students graduate without guidance or direction. Like her colleague Anne-Sophie Souhaité, she advocated the promotion of trades apprenticeship as opposed to academic learning, the learning of a second language, and keeping the mixed private and public school system.

Jack-Yves Bohbot (6<sup>th</sup> constituency, 18.30% in the first round) was pleased to tie with Cécile Duflot (Europe Écologie – Les Verts/Europe Ecology - the Greens). Roxanne Decorte (17<sup>th</sup> constituency, 18.29% in the first round) noted that the record abstention rate in her constituency (47.54%) was fuelled by a very high unemployment rate. She attacked her SP opponent Daniel Vaillant, who advocated legalizing cannabis in what she described as a “Dealer-State”.

Chenva Tieu (10<sup>th</sup> constituency, 23.13% in the first round) criticized the predominance of social housing in his constituency in creating a permanent ghettoization. Claude-Annick Tissot (7<sup>th</sup> constituency, 23.76% in the first round) stressed that achieving a balanced budget by 2016 was the top priority. She reiterated the commitment to incorporate the “golden rule” in the French Constitution, to not replace one of every two public servants who retire, to guarantee savings, retirement plans, social policies, and to support the European project. In her view, the Socialists are against all those objectives and they will drive France into bankruptcy.

Former Prime Minister Senator Jean-Pierre Raffarin stated that he came to bring provincial solidarity to Paris. Turning to the European crisis, he criticized the mess the new government created with Germany, a key ally in Europe, whose friendship is being abused. On the domestic front, he said that the golden rule is the only fiscal rule that will allow France to succeed. He reaffirmed “work” as a value, explaining that it saved China, Brazil, India, and South Africa.

In a very formal speech, François Fillon (2<sup>nd</sup> constituency in Paris, 48.52% of votes in the first round) said from the outset that the Right is deeply rooted in France's history. He reviewed President Sarkozy's five-year mandate of courage, describing the SP agenda as too expensive, and too lax. He called on supporters of the centre to join the former majority again. He pointed out the similarities between the agendas of the NF and the Left Front: increasing the minimum wage (SMIC), lowering gas prices, leaving the euro zone, and so on. As for Europe, he suggested that the continent was facing competition from countries that worked and that France was slow to react; it was losing markets and going into debt. Attacking the SP agenda – return to retirement at age 60, keeping the 35-hour work week, increasing state spending and the number of public servants – he stated that their approach was to give up on the demands of progress. He highlighted the importance of the France/Germany duo that had made it possible to save Europe for the past four years. He considered the meeting at the Élysée Palace between representatives of the German SPD (the main leftist party opposing Angela Merkel) and President Hollande as a political mistake. He praised Germany's austerity policy that has been successfully in place for ten years. He ridiculed the idea of euro bonds that would lead to the pooling of European debts. He criticized President Hollande's message on growth rather than austerity, because he felt that growth should rely on fiscal policies. The solution is to work more. He ridiculed the de-globalization policy supported by some socialist leaders. He said that the Republic was not just the state's business, with its laws and regulations, but that it was everyone's business. Everyone must be accountable. The priorities are school, respect for the state, the role of the family, public safety, the fight against crime through minimum sentences, identity checks, and so on. France is a nation of citizens, not a mosaic, thereby rejecting foreigners' right to vote in municipal elections, a right promoted by the Socialists, which would lead to voting by community.

(After the election, the Socialist Party won 10 of the 18 constituencies in Paris with 47.47% of votes (compared to 11 in 2007 when there were 21 constituencies), against six for the UMP (41.42% of votes) compared to seven in 2007. The two remaining constituencies were won by the Europe Écologie – Les Verts/ Europe Ecology - the Greens, who are close to the SP.)

## **June 17th**

### **a) Visit to Socialist Party headquarters**

The delegation visited the Socialist Party headquarters on Solferino Street, in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, for a meeting with Harlem Désir, the Secretary General of the SP. Senator Conway-Mouret joined the delegation.

Mr. Désir, founder of SOS Racisme in the 1980s, explained why it is important to have the legislative elections after the presidential elections; there is a logical connection between the two elections. The first steps taken by President François Hollande – the decrees on retirement at the age of 60, rent control, school allowance, lowering the compensation of the president, ministers and deputies – were well received by the public and the ratings for the president and prime minister went up; polls also indicated an increase in support for the SP. The NF might get 3 or 4 elected members, and

Bayrou could lose, given that the SP did not support him. The great challenge in legislative elections is whether there will be an absolute majority. He noted that two former presidential candidates were in trouble: François Bayrou and Ségolène Royal. In reference to the rise of the NF, Mr. Désir indicated that this party has been relatively strong for 30 years. Recalling the campaign of President Sarkozy who said that work is better than welfare, and whose campaign was built around security, immigration and crime, he noted that President Sarkozy had taken votes away from the NF. But in the end, words did not turn into action; the NF increased its votes. Marine Le Pen had overhauled the NF. Its strength is in suburban areas, where people felt neglected and deprived of services. The SP must promote reindustrialization policies in those areas and provide them with public services again.

A discussion was held on the Canada/European Union free-trade project. Mr. Désir preferred the expression a symbiotic fair exchange – for instance, the opening of public markets, the protection of the cultural exception and the support of public services. He is well aware of the rise of protectionism; he noted that major corporations have adapted well to globalization, unlike SMEs. Industry accounts for no more than 13% of the GDP, compared to 25% 20 years ago. He clearly identified the issues with the project: patents, supply management in agriculture, designations of origin, and public services. The NAFTA negotiations also encountered resistance – including in terms of Canada’s loss of social security – a threat that never ended up materializing. There was a debate between the SP and the UMP on free trade; the UMP is more liberal, but, in Mr. Désir’s view, it has become liberal only over the past six months. He recognized divisions within the SP between globalization supporters, on the one hand, and protectionists, on the other hand. He said that protectionism was currently not a solution. The focus has to be on industrial policies, education and training. In his view, liberalization has gone too far, creating problems among countries on the right to work. The SP is in favour of adding taxes on financial transactions, but the UK is against it and Germany is reluctant. As for a banking union, the SP and the German SPD are in favour of pooling. There is an obstacle to euro bonds and project bonds in Germany. There are rules, but no European governance. The SP is in favour of national bank governance.

#### **b) Visit to George Pau-Langevin’s constituency**

The Canadian delegation attended a meeting with the SP candidate for the 15<sup>th</sup> constituency of Paris, Ms. George Pau-Langevin, the Minister of Education, responsible for academic success. The delegation followed the candidate to a polling station where Ms. Pau-Langevin was finally able to vote, after a day of touring all the offices in her constituency. In her constituency office, the Minister talked about her political career since she joined the SP in 1975. After working at the municipal level as an arrondissement councillor, she was elected an MP in 2007. She then discussed the files she was in charge of as a minister: drop-out rate (150,000 students every year), student counselling, school health, and educational assistants. She recalls that, under the leadership of the previous government, the drop-out rate and academic failure were attributed to parents, not to the education system or the state. The SP does not lay the blame for those problems solely on parents; other factors to consider are school environment, teaching methods, behavioural problems, parenting, and violence. The

Canadian parliamentarians invited the minister to Canada, particularly to Quebec, to see how those types of problems had been addressed somewhat successfully by school authorities.

### **c) Results**

The Canadian delegation was invited to watch the results at the residence of H  l  ne Conway-Mouret, President of the Groupe d'amiti   France-Canada in the Senate, where the Senator's family and friends got together. As a result, the evening of the election was spent in a very convivial atmosphere.

### **Conclusion**

The Canadian delegation was privileged to attend the last two days of the second round in the legislative elections, which resulted in an absolute majority in the 577-seat National Assembly for the Socialist Party (312 seats) and 226 seats for the UMP/New Centre. The Europe   cologie – Les Verts party had 17 members elected, and the Left Front, 10. Two candidates were elected for the National Front, but the leader was not elected. Other prominent figures and star candidates lost, including S  gol  ne Royal, Fran  ois Bayrou and Jack Lang. The number of female MPs reached 26.9% compared to 18.5% in 2007. The abstention rate of 44% is one of the highest in the country's recent history.

The delegates returned to Canada with a better understanding of the French voting system and a renewed perspective on the major economic, social and demographic issues affecting France, a great country and a friend to Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

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

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Second Round of the French Legislative Elections
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Paris and Poitiers, France
<b>DATES</b>	June 14-17, 2012
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	The Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest The Honourable Serge Joyal The Honourable Marie-Paule Charette-Poulin
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier, Association Secretary
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$ 8,076.54</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$ 3,545.80</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$ 368.23</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 2,533.69</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 14,524.26</b>