



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural
Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie***

**Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie (APF)***

**Fort-de-France, Martinique
March 5-6, 2007**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that attended the meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF), held in Fort-de-France, Martinique, on Monday, March 5, and Tuesday, March 6, 2007, has the honour to present its report. The delegation consisted of the Honourable Andrée Champagne, Senator and Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF, and was accompanied by Mr. Denis Robert, Acting Executive Secretary of the Branch.

The following branches were represented: Andorra, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, France, the Francophone Community of Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels), Gabon, Hungary, Jura, Macedonia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Ontario, Quebec, Romania, Switzerland, Valle d'Aosta.

The Committee met in the Martinique's Departmental Assembly at the invitation of the Designated Chair of the French Branch of the APF, Mr. Bruno Bourg-Broc. The Chair of the Committee, Mr. Ego Perron, President of the Valle d'Aosta Regional Council (Italy), presided.

On arriving at the Departmental Assembly, the members of the Committee were welcomed by the Chair of the General Council, Mr. Claude Lise, Senator for Martinique and member of the French Branch of the APF.

In the course of their deliberations, the members of the Committee debated the following themes, which are all very much in the news:

Ratification of the Convention on Cultural Diversity

Members of the Committee emphasised the status of ratification of the Convention on Cultural Diversity. At the time of the meeting, 45 states had ratified the Convention. This means that it will be coming into force as of March 18, 2007. Senator Champagne described Canada's role in encouraging other countries to ratify the Convention.

Ratification of the UNESCO conventions on protection of cultural heritage

On the question of the ratification of the UNESCO conventions on protection of cultural heritage, the rapporteurs for Niger and Cameroun pointed out that parliaments do not seem very aware of the existence of these conventions, and that the heavy parliamentary workload partly explains why they have not been ratified. The members concluded that it would be necessary to do more work on promoting ratification.

Policy on books in French

The distribution of books in the Francosphere is a key issue with many approaches: cultural, educational, economic and political. Such distribution is an essential tool both for development and for the assertion of a collective and individual identity. The rapporteur for the French Branch clarified for the Committee's members the problems of French-language book distribution. Discussions centred on distribution, private initiatives, the role of international bodies and co-publishing.

Migration policies within the Francosphere

Globalization has highlighted the scale of migratory movements from South to North and from Africa to Europe. In the South as in the North (i.e., the countries of Eastern Europe), a new, more mobile, form of migration is developing. Increasingly, migrants may be students, academics, skilled workers, under contract, or part of skills and expertise exchanges. Unfortunately, the media focus exclusively on the risky attempts of young Africans trying to enter Europe. The model of cooperation between France and Burkina Faso was cited as a possible solution.

The members also debated the following points:

- the impact of cultures and the role of parliaments in the democratic process within the Francosphere; and
- the parliamentary contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In the absence of Mr. Jacques Chagnon, rapporteur for the Quebec Branch, it was decided to defer consideration of the APF Opinion on information technologies in education, and the conclusions of the Bucharest Summit of September 2006, to a later meeting.

The coexistence of freedoms, cultures and religions

To gain a fuller appreciation of such coexistence from the local perspective, the Committee organized a roundtable in which a number of senior figures from Martinique's major religious denominations participated, as well as representatives of the secular community. As a result of the roundtable discussions, a draft recommendation was adopted and will be presented to the APF session scheduled for July in Libreville, Gabon. The discussion of coexistence was enriched by the cultural and political diversity of the Committee's members.

Following the Committee meeting, a delegation led by the Chair, Mr. Ego Perron, visited Mr. Aimé Césaire, in order to pay tribute to this great poet and express grateful appreciation for his invaluable contribution to the existence of a world-wide French-speaking community that is both diverse and respectful of the gifts of each of its member peoples.

The Canadian delegation would like to express its gratitude to the French Branch and in particular to its Designated Chair, Mr. Bruno Bourg-Broc, for the generous welcome the delegation received in Martinique. The delegation would also like to note that this meeting of the Committee was the last for Mr. Bourg-Broc, as he has decided to leave political life.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrée Champagne, Senator
Chair of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Cost

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)</i>
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
DESTINATION	Fort-de-France, Martinique
DATES	March 5-6, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Andrée Champagne
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Denis Robert
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 5,533.67
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 3,045.74
PER DIEMS	\$ 367.03
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 94.50
TOTAL	\$ 9,040.94