



REPORT
of the
CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION
of the
"Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie" (APF)
to the
MEETING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE SECRETARIAT
GENERAL OF THE APF AND
VISIT TO JORDAN, ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND SYRIA
PARIS (FRANCE), AMMAN (JORDAN),
JERUSALEM (ISRAEL),
RAMALLAH (WEST BANK) AND DAMASCUS (SYRIA)
MAY 19 TO 26, 2006

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) which met with officials of the Secretariat General of the APF in Paris, France, on May 19, 2006, and that travelled to Amman, Jordan; Jerusalem, Israel; Ramallah, West Bank, and Damascus, at the invitation of the People's Assembly of the Syrian Arab Republic, from May 21 to 26, 2006, has the honour to present its report.

Report

The delegation was composed of Mr. Bernard Patry, MP, President of the APF.

Friday, May 19, 2006, was set aside for working sessions with staff of the Secretariat General of the APF in Paris. Participants in those meetings included Mr. Jean Yves Pauti, the Administrative Secretary General of the APF.

The following points were discussed at the meetings:

- the Assembly's 2005 and 2006 budgets
- the annual dues for the various branches
- replacing the Canadian adviser to the Secretariat General
- the work of the four committees
- preparations for the annual Assembly to be held in July 2006 in Rabat, Morocco
- preparations for the Sommet de la Francophonie to be held in September 2006 in Bucharest, Romania
- the APF Opinion to be presented at the Summit
- the Agenda of activities for 2006-2007
- the seminar to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Léopold Senghor to be held in June 2006 in Paris
- the Ordre de la Pléiade awards ceremony in June 2006 in Paris
- the list of invited speakers for the opening of the Conference of Elected Representatives of the Mediterranean organized by UNESCO, to be held in June 2006 in Rabat, Morocco

Over the course of the day, Mr. Patry also held discussions with the adviser responsible for cooperation in the Office of the Secretary General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Mr. Marc Cousineau. Mr. Patry and Mr. Cousineau discussed a range of issues relating to progress made by the OIF in the area of cooperation, and in particular the activities of the OIF in Haiti.

On Sunday, May 21, 2006, in Amman, Jordan, Mr. Patry met with the Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Zaid Al Rifai. The Speaker of the Jordanian Senate talked about various current events in his country and in the Middle East, and specifically the efforts made by His Majesty King Abdullah to attract more foreign investment in the Kingdom, particularly investment from Arab states. The Speaker of the Senate pointed to the numerous laws enacted by his country for that purpose, which facilitate the influx of foreign capital.

The Speaker of the Senate also addressed the question of rising oil prices and their impact on his country's economic growth, and the measures taken by the government to combat their negative effects on the people of Jordan.

On the Iraq question, the President of the Senate expressed his country's desire to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq and its support for the government of Iraq in its efforts to stabilize a social environment that may have negative effects on the region as a whole.

On the Palestine question, the Speaker of the Senate reiterated his country's support for the peace process and its desire for the creation of a Palestinian State within its own territory.

Mr. Patry then met with the Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Mr. Hadi Al-Majali. The Speaker of the Parliament, like the Speaker of the Senate, spoke about various issues relating to the Palestine situation and to peace and security in the Middle East.

In his third meeting of the day, Mr. Patry spoke with the Head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Faisal Al-Fayez. Mr. Al-Fayez informed Mr. Patry of the political and electoral reforms taking place in Jordan.

The last meeting held in Jordan took place with the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament, Mr. Mohammed Abou Hudaib, and a representative of the Islamic Action Front. Questions relating to Canada's participation in military missions in Afghanistan, Canadian non-intervention in Iraq and Canada's withdrawal of financial aid to the Palestinian government authorities were raised.

From Monday, May 22, to Wednesday, May 24, 2006, Mr. Patry's activities included attending a meeting of the international peace movement One Voice in Jerusalem, Israel. The meeting was attended by some 50 participants from all over the world.

Also during that time, Mr. Patry held meetings in Jerusalem with representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were attended by Ms. Ilana Mittelman, Deputy Director (North America) and Mr. Michael Harari of the Policy Planning Bureau. The main point discussed was Israel's need to implement unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Patry's last meeting, on Wednesday, May 24, 2006, was in Ramallah, West Bank, with

Mr. Azzam Al-Ahmed, director of the Fatah block in the Palestinian National Council. Mr. Al-Ahmed reported on the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza and Israel's unilateral withdrawal. He also described the impact that the demarcation of boundaries and Israel's building of the defensive fence will have on the chance of establishing a viable Palestinian State. The question of international aid to the Palestinian government being cut off, and its impact on the Palestinian public service, was also raised.

From Wednesday, May 24, to Friday, May 26, 2006, Mr. Patry met in Damascus, Syria, with various government and parliamentary representatives. At his first meeting, Mr. Patry spoke with the Minister of Information, Mr. Mohsin Bilal. Mr. Bilal described his country and his government as based on a secular system and being symbols of

tolerance and coexistence. He expressed his people's frustration at seeing Syria identified by some western governments as a criminal state and at the lack of impartiality exhibited by some foreign media. The same frustration was also voiced in respect of the application or non application of certain United Nations resolutions.

The question of Iraq and of securing the border between the two countries was also addressed. Mr. Bilal reiterated his government's support for the new government of Iraq and its desire for the American military to withdraw from Iraq. The final point raised was the question of Palestine and the election of Hamas.

Mr. Patry then met with his Syrian host, Mr. Mohammed Al-Abrash, the Speaker of the People's Assembly. Mr. Al-Abrash expressed his Assembly's desire to take a more active part in the APF and to play a greater role in the organization. He also expressed a desire to increase cooperation between Canada and Syria in relation to trade and culture.

Mr. Patry's final discussions were with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Moualem. Mr. Moualem generally reiterated the topics of discussion addressed by the other Syrian representatives concerning the situations in relation to Iraq and Palestine. He also described his country's relations with Lebanon and pointed out that Syrian troops had been withdrawn from Lebanon in accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

Speaking of Canada, Mr. Moualem spoke about the good reputation our country enjoys and how Canada could play a constructive role in the region.

The visit to Syria ended with an interview broadcast on Syrian television's Channel 2 in which Mr. Patry summarized his meetings with government representatives and discussed relations between Canada and Syria and the role played by the APF.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard Patry, M.P.
President of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
Canadian Branch,
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Cost

NAME OF ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch, Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting with officials of the Secretariat General of the APF and invitation of the People's Assembly of the Syrian Arab Republic
DESTINATION	Paris, France; Amman, Jordan; Jerusalem, Israel; Ramallah, West Bank; Damascus, Syria
DATES	May 19 to 26, 2006
NAMES OF SENATORS	
NAMES OF MEMBERS	Mr. Bernard Patry, MP
NAMES OF STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ AIR TRANSPORTATION \$5,961.03 GROUND TRANSPORTATION \$187.15
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 787.78
HOSPITALITY	\$0
PER DIEMS	\$ 312.74
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$0
TOTAL	\$ 7,248.78