

Canada - France
Interparliamentary Association



Association interparlementaire
Canada - France

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 36th Annual Meeting**

Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

**Paris and Toulouse, France
July 19 to 24, 2009**

The delegation from the Canadian Group of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association has the honour to present its

Report

From July 19 to 24, 2009, members of the Canadian Group visited Paris and Toulouse as part of the 36th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association. The Canadian and French delegations were made up of the following parliamentarians:

CANADIAN DELEGATION

From the Senate:

The Honourable Lise Bacon, Chair

The Honourable Marcel Prud'homme

The Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, Vice-Chair

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

From the House of Commons:

Ms. Paule Brunelle

Ms. Claude DeBellefeuille

Mr. Yvon Godin

Mr. Robert Vincent

Accompanying Staff:

Mr. Serge Pelletier, Secretary of the Association

Ms. Marie-Ève Hudon, Analyst

FRENCH DELEGATION

From the National Assembly:

Mr. Marc Laffineur, Chair, French Section

Mr. Georges Colombier

Mr. Pierre Lequiller

Mr. Renaud Muselier

From of the Senate:

Mr. Marcel-Pierre Cléach, Chair, France-Canada Senate Group

Mr. Pierre-Yves Collombat

Mr. Louis Duvernois

Mr. Jean-Claude Frécon

Ms. Nathalie Goulet

Mr. François Marc

Mr. Jean-Pierre Placade

Ms. Catherine Procaccia

Accompanying Staff:

Mr. Matthieu Meissonnier, Executive Secretary

Mr. Frédéric Slama, Executive Secretary

MANDATE

The purposes of the Canadian Group of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association are to foster exchanges between Canadian and French parliamentarians, to promote better mutual understanding of national and international problems, to develop cooperation between the two countries in the political, economic, social, cultural and parliamentary fields and, as required, to propose to the respective governments and parliaments appropriate initiatives for strengthening relations between the two countries.

WORKING MEETINGS

As in past years, four topics were on the agenda for the working sessions of the 36th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association. The following topics were discussed by members of the Canadian and French delegations:

1. The military role of Canada and France in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries;
2. The European elections;
3. The global economic crisis and national economic stimulus plans;
4. Government support for culture.

The comments that members of both delegations made during the working meetings are summarized in the four sections below.

1. The military role of Canada and France in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries

The first working meeting of the 36th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association took place on Monday, July 20, 2009, at 46 Vaugirard Street, Paris, France. The topic was the military role of Canada and France in Afghanistan. Senator Marcel-Pierre Cléach presented France's position. MP Yvon Godin and the Honourable Marcel Prud'homme presented Canada's position. Col. Patrick Brethous, of the ground operational forces, and Lt. Col Michel Goya, director of "new conflicts" at the strategic research institute of the military school, were invited to give a presentation on the French army's engagement in Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Michel Goya began the working session with a theoretical presentation about the status of the French armed forces. He spoke about the role of western armies in the Middle East and recalled France's military engagement around the world from the 1960s until today. He pointed out that the military priorities of western armies have changed significantly over this period. Like other members of the coalition engaged in Afghanistan, France is in a military crisis. With respect to civil war, which is the case in Afghanistan, French army officials must consider new ways of interacting and must rethink their approach accordingly.

According to Lt. Col. Goya, the French army has expensive and sophisticated equipment that it is not necessarily suited to the current missions in Afghanistan. Modern warfare is characterized by guerrilla movements and several billion Euros must be invested to modernize equipment. It also requires significant human investment since in-theatre losses are almost as high as losses subsequent to operations (suicide or leaving the army, for instance). Lt. Col. Goya stated that the army must have enough personnel in the field to be effective in this type of conflict. He concluded by considering whether the current conflict in Afghanistan will become the norm in the future. He argued that the French army must be flexible in order to meet current challenges and must have in-depth knowledge of the environment of operations for optimum effectiveness.

Col. Patrick Brethous then spoke about the French army presence in Afghanistan. Between 3,200 and 3,400 men are currently on the ground in Afghanistan, especially in the eastern part of the country (Kapisa, Uzbeen and Surobi). France has three commitments: the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) and the training of Afghan army officers. Among the priorities for the French army are the force's capacity for action, soldiers' equipment, protection and security. At present, the French government is not considering troop reinforcements for this part of the world. As indicated earlier, Col. Brethous stated that the French army must adapt its military presence to better meet the current challenges in Afghanistan. In the short term, the French army is wary of renewed attacks before the elections planned for August and is still making security arrangements for this event. On the whole, the military operation in Afghanistan is complex: it includes multiple objectives (pushing back insurgents, support and assistance for Afghan national forces, assistance to the population) and requires the interaction of various stakeholders and the management of activities that are both civilian and military.

Mr. Marcel-Pierre Cléach pursued the topic, pointing out that coalition forces must take a united stand on the military mission in Afghanistan. They must work to foster Afghan national sentiment and strengthen Afghan national forces. Mr. Cléach stated that France's objective in this conflict is to help the country develop through civic involvement. France must work to defend fundamental freedoms in this region. That said, some parliamentarians are sceptical about the outcome of these operations.

Mr. Yvon Godin then spoke about Canada's mission in Afghanistan. He pointed out that the mission has received a great deal of press from the outset. This sets it apart from Canada's traditional military missions, which have primarily been peacekeeping missions. The first Canadian troops were sent to Afghanistan in January 2002, with heated debate in the House of Commons since then. In May 2006, a vote was held on extending the Canadian mission in Kandahar until 2009; the results of this vote were very close (149 in favour and 145 opposed). The most recent vote on the matter was held in March 2008. The House of Commons agreed at that time to extend the mission until 2011, on the condition that NATO provides reinforcements. Two opposition parties, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois, have opposed the mission from the outset.

Mr. Godin pointed out that public support for the Canadian mission in Afghanistan has varied over time and by region. A recent survey showed that 54% of Canadians are opposed to Canada's mission in Afghanistan. In Quebec, opposition sits at 73%. As of July 20, 125 Canadians have lost their lives on Afghan soil. Canadian troops are in the Kandahar region, where the conflicts have been especially bloody; there are many challenges and much work remains to be done. Parliamentarians and the public in Canada are willing to support the troops' efforts to rebuild the country, help civilians, and for the holding of elections and for changes in legislation pertaining to equality between men and women, for instance. Mr. Godin noted however that as long as there is no direct negotiation between the coalition forces and the Taliban, progress will be very slow.

The Honourable Marcel Prud'homme pointed out that it was a political decision to dispatch Canadian troops to Afghanistan. Having refused to take part in a war against Iraq, the Parliament of Canada recognized its international responsibility in the conflict between coalition forces and the Taliban. The situation in Afghanistan raises many questions. Parliamentarians in Canada are increasingly concerned about the outcome of the conflict: what are the chances of winning? The political parties are divided on the matter. Debate is especially heated since it is a minority government. Public opinion in Canada is also divided. According to Mr. Prud'homme, the legitimacy of the current mission in Afghanistan could benefit from more sustained dialogue between the Taliban and the coalition forces. We must have faith in the Canadian troops on the ground because they are more familiar with the situation than politicians are.

A discussion ensued about the presentations. The delegates spoke first about public support for the armed forces in Afghanistan. In France, there is considerable acceptance of the work being done by the French army and the coalition forces on the ground. That said, it is difficult to measure public support because, in contrast to

Canada, there is little media coverage of the mission in Afghanistan and few surveys have been conducted. In Canada, the issue is the subject of broad debate among the public and politicians.

The members of the Canadian and French delegations agreed on the importance of the mission in Afghanistan to prevent the rise of a state that advocates terrorism. Parliamentarians were divided however in their views on the financial and human investments that should be made. This may be partially explained by the two countries' very different military past. In France, it is readily acknowledged that financial investments are not sufficient for the military engagements, and that this can slow down the effectiveness of military interventions. In Canada, there is support for the troops but not necessarily for the mission. There has been much loss of life to date. There is no question at present of sending additional troops and it is agreed that the Canadian mission in Afghanistan will not continue beyond 2011.

2. European elections

The second working meeting took place in the afternoon of July 20. The topic was the results of the latest European elections, held in June, 2009. Mr. Pierre Lequiller, Deputy and Chair of the Committee of European Affairs of the National Assembly, gave a presentation to the members of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association.

Mr. Lequiller began by pointing out that, thanks to the work of parliamentary committees, European issues are at the heart of debate in the French parliament. The Committee of European Affairs of the National Assembly is responsible for monitoring of European Union (EU) affairs. In particular, it considered the Lisbon treaty, which provides for closer cooperation between national parliaments in the EU's work and introduces significant constitutional improvements in the workings of the Union.

Over the years, European elections have been a way for the French people to express their dissatisfaction with their government. Since 1979, every government in office has been defeated in the European elections. In June 2009, the Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) party garnered 27.8% of votes, a significant increase over the previous elections. The Parti socialiste (PS) and the Europe écologie party ranked second and third, earning 16.48% and 16.28% of votes respectively. The vote was splintered among the other opposition parties. Mr. Lequiller suggested that the June 2009 elections rewarded those parties that addressed European issues.

Mr. Lequiller remarked that one might have expected the economic crisis to favour the opposition parties, especially the parties on the left. This was not borne out in a number of countries, where parties on the right came out on top. Spain and Great Britain, where parties on the left are strong, also saw a rise of the right. The Parti populaire européen (PPE) party won the most votes overall in EU member countries. No party won a majority of votes. The European Parliament includes a very wide range of parties and it must work with the representatives of all political parties, from the left to the right.

Mr. Lequiller pointed out that voter turnout in the last European elections was very low. In France, it was just 40.6%. Over the years, turnout has dropped off gradually and

steadily, in France and in other European countries. Ranging from 85% in Belgium, where voting is compulsory, to 15% in Slovenia, which just joined the EU, the changing rate of voter turnout points to the need to better inform the public of the purpose of the EU and how it operates.

A short debate followed this presentation. The French parliamentarians acknowledged that low voter turnout is a significant problem in European elections. These variations raise questions about the role and legitimacy of the European Parliament as a parliamentary institution. Perhaps fundamental reform of European institutions would lend real credibility to the work of parliamentarians. It must nevertheless be recognized that the European Parliament makes a valuable contribution on a number of files. The members of the French delegation maintained that the media could foster a better understanding of the democratic aspect of European institutions, making voters more aware of the real work being done to promote the development of Europe.

3. Global economic crisis and the economic stimulus plans of Canada and France

The third working session took place on Tuesday, July 21, at 32 Saint-Dominique Street, Paris, France. The topic was the economic crisis, recovery and macroeconomic policies. Deputy Marc Laffineur, the Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, and MPs Yvon Godin, Robert Vincent and Claude DeBellefeuille spoke on behalf of the French and Canadian delegations. Ms. Agnès Bénassy-Quéré, Director of the CEPII (Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales) and professor at the Paris École polytechnique, and Mr. Jean-Luc Schneider, Deputy Director, OECD Economics Department, were invited to give a presentation at this working meeting.

Mr. Marc Laffineur opened with a brief historical overview of the economy of France and Europe. He recalled that President Nicolas Sarkozy, who was President of the European Union when the crisis began, was in favour of coordinated action throughout Europe and around the globe. Mr. Laffineur pointed out that EU member countries are suffering the effects of the crisis to varying degrees. France has suffered, but less so than other European countries. A 26 billion Euro stimulus plan was unveiled in February, providing for 1,000 investment projects in various areas: transport infrastructure, higher education and research, government property assets, housing, urban renewal and health. A number of the investments made feature the participation of local communities. One of the measures in the stimulus plan is the earlier reimbursement of the VAT with a view to supporting investment by territorial communities.

Ms. Agnès Bénassy-Quéré gave a presentation about Europe in the global crisis. In her opinion, Europe has been hard hit by the crisis, as a result of its high exposure to "toxic" bank assets. The crisis has been felt to varying degrees in EU member countries. France has fared relatively well because it has less exposure to "toxic" assets and because there is less banking activity than in other countries. She briefly outlined the proposals contained in the Larosière report, released in February 2009, regarding strengthening European oversight and financial stability mechanisms. She spoke about the various EU member countries' strategies to come through the crisis. She concluded

by stressing the importance of combining instruments, coordinating action among partners, taking action across Europe (Stability Pact, for instance) and looking ahead to post-crisis strategies.

Mr. Jean-Luc Schneider then spoke about national stimulus plans. He pointed out that strategies to respond to the crisis first appeared in the fall of 2008. Stimulus plans were also prepared by many countries to encourage economic growth. Mr. Schneider also suggested that EU member countries must coordinate their efforts to come through the crisis. The strategies set out in the stimulus plans vary from country to country (e.g. infrastructure spending, support for specific sectors, tax cuts). France's stimulus plan includes various measures: infrastructure spending (e.g. maintenance and repair), helping the newly unemployed find work, subsidies for certain sectors (e.g. automotive), or tax cuts for the underprivileged. Mr. Schneider concluded by pointing out that a number of national stimulus plans have worsened the fiscal or budget situation of many OECD countries. These countries will probably have to review their economic strategies (tax increases, for instance) in order to recover the investments made during the crisis.

The Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest outlined Canada's position in the crisis. He pointed out that the federal government has made significant efforts in recent years to put its fiscal house in order. Despite a very strong fiscal picture, Canada has also been hard hit by the crisis, suffering many job losses. Mr. Rivest noted that Canada's economy is very closely linked to the US economy, with about 72% of Canadian exports going to the US. There was a drop in US demand during the crisis, with a direct impact on Canada's economic growth.

Mr. Rivest noted that the impact of the crisis varies by region, province and sector. The automotive sector has suffered in particular, especially in Ontario. For the first time in its history, Ontario has received equalization payments. Other sectors have also suffered a great deal, including forestry and construction. There have been many job losses already and more are expected. Canada's financial institutions are very stable since financial sector activities are highly diversified.

Mr. Rivest pointed out that, given Canada's political structure, different approaches were taken across the country to soften the blow of the economic crisis. Each province put forward its own stimulus plan, in addition to the one announced by the federal government in the winter of 2009. The federal government used similar approaches to those used in other OECD countries, including tax cuts, guaranteed business loans and infrastructure investments. The government presented a progress report in June 2009. The opposition parties criticized the government for the delay in making investments and the complexity of programs. A number of the investments promised depend on the participation of other orders of government (provincial and municipal) or of the private sector.

Mr. Yvon Godin then pointed out that some layoffs occurred before the economic crisis, especially in Eastern Canada. There were a number of plant closures there, especially in the fishery. According to Mr. Godin, the investments set out in Canada's stimulus plan do not do enough for the sectors in the greatest difficulty (fishery, forestry). Mr. Godin

also stressed the complexity of the investments announced by the federal government. Much infrastructure spending depends on the participation of three orders of government. In the spring of 2009, the opposition parties demanded that the government amend the employment insurance regime to help workers who were hard hit by the crisis.

Mr. Robert Vincent stressed the importance of trade between Canada and the United States. In his opinion, the protectionist measures taken by the US government under the “Buy American Act” have a direct effect on Canadian businesses, with revenues dropping in certain sectors. According to Mr. Vincent, Canada must therefore redouble its efforts to develop trade with EU member countries.

Finally, Ms. Claude DeBellefeuille provided a more regional and sectoral view of the crisis. She pointed out that some municipalities and workers have been harder hit than others, especially in the forestry sector. In some municipalities, many people are unemployed due to plant closures in this sector. This affects municipal services, which are losing property tax revenue. Ms. DeBellefeuille stressed that the crisis has not hurt the automotive sector alone. In her opinion, the federal government’s stimulus plan is unbalanced and unfair, with little assistance available for workers. She argued that preparations must begin now for the period after the crisis. Alternatives must be offered to small municipalities and workers who have been hard hit by the crisis, including changes to the current employment insurance system.

In the ensuing discussion, the delegates looked at the similarities and differences between the two countries. France focused on various strategies in its stimulus plan. As in Canada, the effects were felt more strongly in some regions of France than in others. The delegates recognized on the whole that Canada and France are in different situations. Their history as regards the state of the nation’s finances differs. As a result, the two countries will have to find different ways out of the crisis. The delegates agreed that protectionism is not the answer. On the contrary, strategies of openness and policy coordination are needed. In the long term, Canada and France will face similar economic challenges: dealing with the ageing population; converting industry to cleaner resources; maximizing the use of new technologies etc.

4. Government support for culture: approach of Canada and France

The fourth working meeting was held in the afternoon of July 21. The topic was government support for culture. Senator Louis Duvernois served as rapporteur for the French delegation. MP Paule Brunelle and the Honourable Claudette Tardif served this role for the Canadian Group. Ms. Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent, state councillor, former heritage director (1993-1997) and current chair of the history committee (2007-2009) with the Ministry of Culture, spoke about France’s cultural policy.

The Honourable Claudette Tardif began by providing an overview of government measures in support of culture. In Canada, jurisdiction over culture is not clearly established in the Constitution. Canada does not have a national cultural policy setting out parameters for government action in this regard. Each order of government (federal, provincial and municipal) provides its own forms of support. According to official figures,

the support for culture provided by the three orders of government totalled \$8.29 billion in 2005-2006. Half of federal spending went to broadcasting. At the provincial level, the funding goes primarily to libraries and heritage. At the municipal level, government assistance goes primarily to libraries.

According to Ms. Tardif, Canada faces a number of challenges relating to culture. Government support is nearly inevitable in Canada since most artists, producers and creators cannot make a living from their art alone. Ms. Tardif pointed out that the economic stimulus plan Canada announced in the winter of 2009 did not include support for the arts and culture sector. She also mentioned other challenges unique to Canada: a large expanse of land, small population, proximity to American culture, the presence of two linguistic groups (Anglophones and Francophones) and a lack of coordinated action by the various orders of government. In recent years, the Government of Canada has cut funding to the arts and culture, hurting cultural organizations and artists.

Ms. Tardif then spoke specifically about support for culture in Francophone minority communities. The arts and culture in minority communities are closely linked with community vitality. The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages recently published a study on this specific topic, concluding that the mechanisms promoting the arts and culture in minority communities must be strengthened in order to support community growth and development. The volunteers and cultural organizations in these communities are burnt out by the lack of support, human and financial resources and political will. According to Ms. Tardif, this points to the weaknesses in the application of the *Official Languages Act*. This Act sets out the government's commitment to the growth and development of official language minority communities. The federal government must adopt a long-term funding plan in this regard to support the arts and culture in official language minority communities.

Ms. Paule Brunelle then spoke about culture in the province of Quebec, stating that the French language is a pillar of culture in the province. The appeal of English poses a number of challenges, leading the Quebec government to make certain choices with regard to immigration and the protection of the French language. Ms. Brunelle stressed that Quebec's culture industry is growing and provides significant economic impetus. The Quebec government has recognized the need to support the arts and culture over the years. Since the 1960s, Quebec's leaders of all political stripes have defended Quebec's role in promoting French-language arts and culture within and outside the province. They have also demanded full jurisdiction over culture. The Bloc Québécois would also like Quebec to have full jurisdiction over arts and culture. In conclusion, Ms. Brunelle pointed out that the various parties in the federal political arena disagree on government measures in support of culture. In her opinion, government support should be increased and should not be open for political discussion.

Mr. Louis Duvernois acknowledged that culture is closely linked with the promotion of the French language in Canada. In France and Canada, promoting Francophone identity is a way of defending culture. France engages in significant cultural diplomacy abroad, seeking to disseminate its culture (e.g. Alliance françaises, TV5). Recently it

has given serious consideration to restructuring its cultural, educational and audiovisual network abroad. According to Mr. Duvernois, national economic stimulus plans have often overlooked the economic contribution of culture. Promoting a country's language and culture often makes an essential contribution to its strength. In his opinion, it is time for change in the cultural cooperation between Canada and France. The two countries can learn a lot from each other in meeting their respective objectives. France could for instance adopt digitization policies based on Canada's example.

Ms. Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent pointed out similarities in the cultural policies of Canada and France. In her opinion, jurisdiction over culture is also contentious in France. The central government has long used culture for propaganda purposes. Territorial communities, communes, cities, regions and departments have played an increasingly important role over time. Local stakeholders are playing a growing role in defining cultural policy domestically and are also playing a growing role in foreign cultural policy. France must recognize that the French language is in jeopardy around the world. Domestically, France must deal with minority and regional language issues. Ms. de Saint-Pulgent questioned whether these languages are equal to the French language and whether they should be included in the Constitution. She then noted that France invests about 17 billion Euros in culture and communications annually. France is still the top tourist destination worldwide. According to Ms. de Saint-Pulgent, the French government does not fully recognize the economic contribution of culture. The financial crisis is hurting small cultural institutions in particular. Moreover, France must deal with the strong American presence, especially in the film industry. Ms. de Saint-Pulgent concluded by saying that the French National Assembly is currently considering the issue of copyright on the Internet. In her opinion, countries including Canada and France must work together to achieve objectives relating to the promotion of culture. A book by Ms. de Saint-Pulgent (entitled *Culture et communication : Les missions d'un grand ministère*) was distributed to the members of both delegations.

The following discussion addressed different topics. It was noted that France spends a great deal on culture although it is difficult to say exactly how much it spends and what the real economic benefits are. The French government does not invest the same amount in the regions. Culture is often promoted by local stakeholders, both in France and in Canada. The members of both delegations acknowledged that the culture sector creates jobs at little cost. Awareness work must be done however, targeting both political leaders and the public, to highlight the need for government support for culture. On the whole, people might be more interested in culture if it were readily accessible.

MEETINGS, VISITS AND OFFICIAL RECEPTIONS

The first official reception of the 36th Annual Meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association took place on Sunday, July 19, at the Powers Hotel, in Paris, France. Mr. Marcel-Pierre Cléach and Ms. Catherine Procaccia greeted the Canadian delegation. The delegates then attended a working dinner, along with a representative of the Canadian embassy in Paris, Mr. Marc Berthiaume. A number of topics were on the agenda including: national economic stimulus plans, the political situation in France and various social issues of interest to Canada and France.

On Monday, July 20, the Canadian delegates were given an historical and institutional tour of the Senate, together with two French senators, Mr. Marcel-Pierre Cléach and Ms. Nathalie Goulet. This was the first visit of the Palais du Luxembourg for some of the Canadian delegates. A guide pointed out architectural, artistic and political features of the institution. The first working meeting took place immediately after this tour. A working luncheon was then hosted by the France-Canada Senate Group. Col. Patrick Brethous, Lt. Col. Michel Goya and Col. Benoît Trochu joined the delegates at this luncheon. There was interesting discussion of France's and Canada's military role in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The second working meeting took place that afternoon. Two members of the French delegation and eight Canadian delegates then attended the official residence of the Speaker of the Senate for a conversation with Mr. Gérard Larcher, which took place in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect. Mr. Larcher acknowledged the important work of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association. He spoke to the Canadian delegates about the proposals for Senate reform. He promised to send them a copy of his work on bicameralism and the role of second chambers around the world. The meeting concluded with a few comments regarding secularism.

On Tuesday, July 21, the Canadian delegates received an historical and institutional tour of the National Assembly. Unfortunately, no members of the French Section were able to join the tour. A guide described the role of the National Assembly and its Deputies and the history of the Palais Bourbon. Two Deputies and two Senators joined the Canadian delegates after the tour for a third working meeting. The experts invited to this working meeting, Ms. Agnès Bénassy-Quéré and Mr. Jean-Luc Schneider, joined the two delegations for a working luncheon hosted by the France-Canada National Assembly Group. This provided an opportunity to continue the discussions from the previous working meeting, regarding the economy in Canada and France.

There was a special session of the National Assembly during the 36th Annual Meeting, allowing the Canadian delegates to attend a public session for questions to the government on the afternoon of July 21. At the beginning of the session, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Bernard Accoyer, welcomed the Canadian delegation. The Canadian Group then attended a discussion with Mr. Patrick Devedjian, the minister responsible for the stimulus plan, along with Mr. Marc Laffineur and His Excellency Mr. Marc Lortie, Ambassador of Canada to France. Minister Devedjian explained the features of the French stimulus plan, announced in December 2008 and adopted in February 2009. The Canadian delegation was impressed by the speedy and direct investments made by the French government in response to the economic crisis. They recognized however that some of the measures taken by France were not applicable in Canada due to the division of powers among three orders of government. Minister Devedjian stated that France's success in managing the economic crisis owes a great deal to its ability to centralize the problems associated with the crisis. The minister concluded by acknowledging that there will ultimately be a price to pay since France's budget deficit has nearly doubled since the start of the crisis.

At the end of the afternoon, the members of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association attended the Hôtel de Lassay, along with His Excellency Ambassador

Lortie, for an official conversation with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Accoyer. Mr. Accoyer began by remarking on the unique and special relationship between France and Canada. He acknowledged the need for both countries to work together on international issues of mutual interest. Like his counterpart from the Senate, he expressed his appreciation for the work the Canada-France Parliamentary Association has done over the years. The delegates thanked the President for meeting them, since they regard parliamentary diplomacy as a very important aspect of the relationship between the two countries. A number of delegates stated that parliamentary associations provide a unique opportunity for interaction in an atmosphere of mutual respect and diversity of opinions. Mr. Accoyer concluded by wishing the Canadian delegates much success with the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, to be held in British Columbia.

This very busy day ended with an official dinner hosted by His Excellency Mr. Lortie, at his official residence in Paris. Four National Assembly Deputies joined the French and Canadian delegations for this dinner: Mr. Olivier Dussopt, Mr. Jérôme Bignon, Mr. Richard Mallié and Mr. François Loncle. His Excellency Mr. Lortie and Mr. Marc Laffineur paid tribute to the Honourable Lise Bacon, thanking her for her efforts to continually improve parliamentary relations between Canada and France and for her contribution to parliamentary life in Canada and Quebec.

On Wednesday, July 22, the Canadian delegates travelled to Toulouse with two French Deputies, Mr. Marc Laffineur and M. Georges Colombier. They had a working luncheon and then took a guided tour of Toulouse. Ms. Olga Gonzalez-Tricheux, councillor responsible for international relations for the Toulouse mayor's office, accompanied the members of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association on this tour. It was very interesting to visit this university and industrial centre, known especially for aeronautics, aerospace and research. In the late afternoon, a reception was held at the Capitole, with Ms. Gonzalez-Tricheux and Mr. Pierre Cohen, Deputy and Mayor of Toulouse, in attendance. This meeting provided for interesting and informative discussions regarding the economic and university life of Toulouse and the impact of the economic crisis on the city's population. Mr. Cohen maintained that funding for research is essential for economic prosperity. Other topics were discussed, including urban development, social cohesion and the role cities play. The delegates met later that evening for an informal dinner.

On Thursday, July 23, Mr. Jean-Pierre Placade and Ms. Catherine Procaccia joined the other delegates for a visit to the 17th Airborne Regiment – Montauban. Lt. Col. Thévenot welcomed the members of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association and explained the Regiment's role and history. Representatives of the Regiment then gave an account of their experiences in the field in Afghanistan. As part of the mission, French servicemen rub shoulders with the local people, the national army and the Afghan police. Their primary role is to help establish a secure climate in Kapisa province, to the northeast of Kabul. The servicemen face constant threats from insurgents and improvised explosive devices. These two accounts illustrated the complexity and many challenges of the Afghanistan mission. The delegates toured the specialized instruction facilities, which contain a large sample of ammunition recovered

from the Regiment's various mission sites. They then attended a working luncheon with eight Regiment representatives. Ms. Monique Valat, Montauban municipal councillor responsible for relations with the army, was also in attendance. The Association members enjoyed this tour of the facilities of the 17th Airborne Regiment – Montauban, as it afforded a closer glimpse of the implications of France's military mission in Afghanistan.

In the afternoon the delegates visited the Airbus headquarters. They were greeted by Mr. Bruno du Pradel, director of international relations, and Mr. Francis Robillard, international director of cooperation (Americas). The visit began with a general introduction to the company's activities, especially programs A-350 and A-380. The presenters then spoke about Airbus's presence in Canada and the company's future plans. The delegates toured the scale models showing the makeup and possible configurations of models A-350 and A-380. Finally they visited the model A-380 assembly site (Jean-Luc Lagardère plant), which covers 50 hectares. The members of both delegations found the tour very interesting. In the evening, they met for an informal dinner.

On Friday, July 24, the delegation members visited the Midi-Pyrénées Regional Council to meet with Mr. Bernard Raynaud, vice-president responsible for the implementation and coordination of regional policies and actions relating to economic development, trade and handicrafts, and Mr. Philippe Guérin, vice-president responsible for international relations and the implementation of the economic stimulus plan for the Midi-Pyrénées Region. This region is the fifth largest region in France in terms of exports to Canada, primarily aeronautical products. There is also trade in the culture, education and agri-food sectors. This meeting gave delegates a clearer picture of the effects of the economic crisis on local enterprises.

The delegates then visited the Cité de l'espace de Toulouse, where they were greeted by Mr. Pierre Tréfouret, director of external communications, education and public affairs for the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES), Mr. Marc Pircher, director of the Centre spatial de Toulouse (CST), and Mr. Bernard Cabrières, deputy director of operations for CNES. There was a general presentation about France's space policy and the essential role it plays in Europe and internationally. CNES and CST specialists and the delegates met for a working luncheon, which included lively discussions about Canada's and France's commitment to space. The members of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association then toured the facilities of the Cité de l'espace, ranging from satellite design to launching and activities in space. The delegates acknowledged the importance of Canada and France complying with international rules on the management of space debris. In the evening, the delegates met for a farewell dinner. They once again paid tribute to the Honourable Lise Bacon for her fine work in maintaining harmonious relations between Canada and France.

CONCLUSION

The 36th Annual Meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of friendship, mutual respect and deep attachment between our two countries. The members of the Canadian Group

derived a great deal from this experience, both politically and on a human level. All the delegates expressed their appreciation and regret regarding the Honourable Lise Bacon's imminent departure from political life. They nevertheless promised to carry on the harmonious interparliamentary relations witnessed during her term as Chair of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association.

A summary of the expenses for the 36th Annual Meeting is appended.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Jean-Claude Rivest, Senator
Canada-France Interparliamentary Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-France Interparliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	36 th Annual Meeting
DESTINATION	Paris and Toulouse, France
DATES	July 19 to 24, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Hon. Lise Bacon, Chair The Hon. Marcel Prud'homme The Hon. Jean-Claude Rivest, Vice- Chair The Hon. Claudette Tardif
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Paule Brunelle Ms. Claude DeBellefeuille Mr. Yvon Godin Mr. Robert Vincent
STAFF	Mr. Serge Pelletier, Secretary of the Association Ms. Marie-Ève Hudon, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 25,717.37
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 1,222.97
PER DIEMS	\$ 3,939.47
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 1,572.80

**MISCELLANEOUS /
REGISTRATION FEES**

\$ 0.00

TOTAL

\$ 32,452.61