



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Seminar on
*Democracy and Economic Good Governance: The Role of
Parliament of the Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie (APF)*
Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie (APF)*
Cotonou, Benin
November 10-11, 2010**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF), which attended the parliamentary seminar on *Democracy and Economic Good Governance: The Role of Parliaments* that was held in Cotonou, Benin, on November 10 and 11, 2010, has the honour to present its report.

The delegation was made up of the Hon. **Pierre De Bané**, Senator and Chair of the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee. He was accompanied by Mr. François Michaud, Executive Branch Secretary. The following branches of the APF attended the seminar as well: Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Central African Republic, France, Mali, Quebec and Senegal.

Since 1994, the APF has organized biannual information seminars together with the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) for parliamentarians from a national parliament or a specific region. The themes for these seminars are chosen by the host parliament, based on its needs. The speakers are parliamentarians from all the regions represented in the APF.

Benin's parliament requested that the speakers address the following issues in their seminars: parliament's power of inquiry and oversight (1 – budgetary oversight; 2 – committees of inquiry and oversight); the role of standing committees; financial transparency in politics; and the role of parliaments on the international stage.

The seminar began with an official opening ceremony that included speeches from Ms. **Amissetou Affo Djobo**, member of the National Assembly (Benin) and Chair of the Steering Committee for the seminar; Mr. **Jacques Legendre**, Senator (France) and Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF; and Mr. **Mathurin Coffi Nago**, President of the National Assembly (Benin).

The first session covered the power parliaments have in terms of inquiry and oversight, specifically budgetary oversight, which is a traditional oversight mechanism available to parliamentarians.

The Hon. **Pierre De Bané** was the first to speak on this topic. He gave an overview of the situation in the Parliament of Canada. He explained that this issue is very important, as the budget is the main political document of the year. The government uses the budget to identify its priorities and announce new measures. Senator De Bané explained that, in Canada, the government must obtain the approval of the House of Commons for its budget. If this approval is not granted, then the government falls and an election is triggered. Therefore, it is Members of Parliament who authorize the government to spend money and collect taxes. In order to exercise its oversight role, Canadian parliamentarians have access to a number of tools, such as the Auditor General, the *Access to Information Act*, and public hearings. Senator **De Bané** noted that budget allocation must be optimal, because governments cannot escape the consequences of their actions.

Ms. **Henriette Martinez**, Deputy (France), spoke about how each country uses a different system, and all systems are not ideal or transferable to other countries. She emphasized the importance of transparency and access to information, as budgetary

oversight is related to human rights. In his presentation, Mr. **Jérôme Lavou**, member of the National Assembly (Central Africa Republic), confirmed that parliament is not involved in preparing the budget: it receives the budget only when the document has been drawn up.

Ms. **Christine Defraigne**, Senator (French Community of Belgium), addressed the assembly to talk about actions parliaments can take. She explained that parliamentary committees are a means to create legislation to improve the situation.

The second session began with a presentation by Ms. **Johanne Gonthier**, member of the National Assembly (Quebec). She talked about economic foresight, giving a brief overview of Quebec and its economic governance.

The Hon. **Pierre De Bané** opened the second day of the seminar with a presentation on transparency and ethics. It is becoming harder and harder for parliamentarians to do their jobs: citizens want to know what decisions are being made, who is making the decisions and how this authority is wielded. Senator **De Bané** explained that, in Canada, the rules governing ethics and transparency are becoming more and more stringent. He used funding for political parties and candidates as an example, and talked about how political contributions can and cannot be made. Mandating committees and ethics officers with codes of ethics can help make this kind of information more accessible. Having access to information allows citizens to be better informed and, since the Auditor General reports to Parliament on problems within the government, transparency is ensured. Senator **De Bané** ended his presentation by emphasizing that parliamentarians have a noble role, and a duty to refrain from failing citizens so that they can reach their full potential.

Mr. **Abdramane Sylla**, member of the National Assembly (Mali), opened the last session of the seminar by talking about parliaments and their roles on the international stage. He noted that parliamentary diplomacy does not conflict with traditional diplomacy. As parliamentarians must vote on international treaties now that globalization is a reality and government delegations now include parliamentarians, it is necessary for everyone to be open-minded so that parliamentarians can build international relationships.

Ms. **Gonthier** then talked about globalization and advances in technology. She believes that information and discussion networks must be created.

The Canadian Branch of the APF wishes to recognize the financial support that the APF contributed to this important mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Pierre De Bané, P.C., Senator
Member 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</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary Seminar on Democracy and Good Economic Governance: The Role of Parliaments of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	Cotonou, Benin
DATES	November 10-11, 2010
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre De Bané
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	François Michaud
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,033.61
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 872.62
PER DIEMS	\$ 652.48
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 18.43
TOTAL	\$ 8,577.14