

**Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs
Whitehorse, Yukon - July 9-10, 1998**

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS IN
WHITEHORSE**

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WHITEHORSE - The fourth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs, held this year in Whitehorse, allowed provincial, territorial and federal delegates responsible for Francophone affairs to discuss issues of concern to Francophone and Acadian communities from across the country.

The Conference provided an opportunity to review a number of issues relating to intergovernmental cooperation and to gain a better understanding of two issues of particular concern to Francophone and Acadian communities: governmental restructuring and health services.

In the area of health, the ministers asked that Francophone affairs officials, in cooperation with their counterparts responsible for health and training, look at the status of French-language training for health professionals and of health care service delivery in French in each province and territory in order to identify potential areas of cooperation.

The participants also underscored the importance of ensuring the maintenance of French-language services in any transfers of federal responsibilities to the provinces and territories, or of provincial and territorial responsibilities to regional and municipal agencies.

In anticipation of the upcoming Sommet de la Francophonie to be held in Moncton from September 3 to 5, 1999, the ministers also reiterated their desire to support this international event and help make it a unique occasion for celebrating Canadian Francophones in all regions of the country in 1999.

"I am pleased to see the increasing priority that the provinces and territories assembled here have accorded to Canadian Francophones," declared the Government House Leader, the Honourable Don Boudria, on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Sheila Copps. "As a Member of Parliament for a Francophone riding in Ontario, I must stress the fact that we have everything to gain from making a priority of developing the full potential of our communities in all sectors of Canadian life," he added.

For his part, the Yukon Government Leader, the Honourable Piers McDonald called this fourth conference in Whitehorse an "excellent opportunity to highlight the vitality of Yukon's Francophone community and to emphasize the economic contributions of Francophone communities in all regions of the country." Commenting on the fact that the

provinces and territories have seized the occasion of the Conference to deplore recent years' federal cuts to official-languages budgets, Mr. McDonald stated that he had held "frank and open discussions on the question of funding, which is crucial to the ability to deliver services in French and contributes to the development and well-being of Yukon's and all of Canada's Francophone communities."

Mr. Boudria noted the concerns of the provincial and territorial governments and promised to raise them with the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Sheila Copps, as well as with his federal cabinet colleagues.

The fifth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs will be held in Prince Edward Island in 1999, in conjunction with the Sommet de la Francophonie.

Ministerial Conferences on Francophone Affairs bring together representatives from the federal government and the governments of provinces and territories with minority Francophone communities. Quebec has observer status at these meetings.

- 30 -

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