

A New Partnership for the Advancement of the Canadian Francophonie

Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 19, 2003

Highlights

At the closing of the eighth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs (MCFA), held in Winnipeg on September 18-19, the ministers and elected officials arrived at a strong consensus aimed at establishing a new partnership with a view to strengthening the Canadian francophonie. Never before has the cooperation between governments been as intense and promising as it has been with regard to this issue. Intergovernmental cooperation has been recognized as the tool of choice for the advancement of the most pressing issues. The ministers and elected officials also agreed on an intergovernmental action plan to contribute to the development of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities. This action plan gives effect to the *Declaration of Principles of Government Leadership with Respect to the Canadian Francophonie*, adopted in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, in October 2002.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Strategies and Agreements

On the eve of the renewal of federal – provincial/territorial agreements on the Promotion of Official Languages, the delegates agreed to develop interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation strategies which will serve to strengthen partnerships, facilitate knowledge sharing and increase the effectiveness and use of resources.

Minister Greg Selinger, the MCFA Chair, emphasized the necessity of both levels of government maintaining close relations with regard to the implementation of the intergovernmental action plan adopted at the MCFA. “Intergovernmental cooperation is the most effective mechanism for promoting the development of francophone and Acadian communities across Canada”. He also stated that he was happy to be able to count on Québec's renewed and determined contribution.

“I am happy to note the tangible progress that has been made since our last meeting. The Government of Canada's *Action Plan for Official Languages* contains several major intergovernmental initiatives. Its success will greatly depend on cooperation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments”, stated the Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for Canada.

In keeping with its new approach, Québec affirmed its desire to increase its level of cooperation with the other provinces and territories as regards the development of the Canadian francophonie.

Advancement of Key Issues

The ministers and elected officials agreed to take joint action in many areas, including early childhood development, francophone/Acadian community economic development and francophone cultural development.

The provincial and territorial ministers and elected officials responsible for francophone affairs met with representatives from *Société Santé en français* and the *Consortium national de formation en santé* to take stock of the major developments in this area in the past year. This is a part of the framework of initiatives already undertaken by the MCFA to contribute to the improvement of health services in French in all of the provinces and territories. The ministers and elected officials greatly appreciated the presentation made by *Société Santé en français* and the *Consortium national de formation en santé* and strongly encourage these organizations to continue their efforts to increase French-language services in all provinces and territories. The MCFA will explore the possibility of providing all francophones in Canada with access to a national French-language health line.

“The commitment of the Conference delegates to the key issues requiring action was reaffirmed during this meeting. This augurs well for the development of our communities”, stated Minister Selinger.

The MCFA will soon have a web site that will contribute to improving communications between governments and communities. It will be accessible at www.afi-ifa.ca.

The next MCFA will be held in New Brunswick in the fall of 2004, as part of celebrations for the 400th anniversary of the francophone presence in North America.

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Appendix: Document summarizing intergovernmental actions adopted at the eighth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs

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