

## **Communiqué News Release**

### **MINISTERS REINFORCE THEIR COOPERATION ON FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS**

#### **For immediate release**

Toronto, September 18, 1997 – Delegates from provincial, territorial and federal governments met in Toronto at the Interministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs to discuss common objectives. The Conference reinforced the need for collaboration between governments in matters related to French language services and the development of Francophone communities in Canada.

The conference was the setting for the national launch of the *Centre d'information pour les francophones du Canada*, a country-wide Internet network of information in French. "The Francophone information highway is now a reality from coast to coast", announced the Ontario Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, Noble A. Villeneuve. "Provincial, territorial and federal governments have further enriched communications with their Francophone constituents by publishing information in French on their Internet sites, including a description of their services and products. Also, all government sites are now linked through one common site developed in New Brunswick. The address is <http://www.canada.francophone.net>."

From the presentations and deliberations a clear consensus resulted that a bilingual workforce and resources enhance Canada's economic development. Discussions among government officials were productive and led to the following conclusions:

As part of their efforts to maximize the use of existing resources, government translation services will continue to work together on collaborative projects. A meeting of translation services is planned in Manitoba in the near future.

Ministers will continue to participate actively in international events, such as the Sommet de la Francophonie which may be held in Moncton in 1999, and the Jeux de la Francophonie to be held in Ottawa-Hull in 2001.

Following the success of the first National Forum on Economic Development for Francophone communities, held in Beauce, Québec, in the Fall of 1996, a second Forum will be held in Winnipeg in February 1998. Delegates from all regions will consider a tourism promotion strategy spearheaded by Francophone communities.

Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps, credited her provincial and territorial colleagues for their ongoing work. "French language and culture are fundamental to our Canadian identity. Through their cooperation, governments confirm the increasing economic relevance of these fundamental characteristics." In this context, Minister Copps announced she is working to renew the Federal-provincial/territorial partnerships in support of French language services and the development of francophone communities.

Delegates to the conference underline that this renewal is an opportunity to improve these agreements by simplifying procedures and focusing on common objectives to benefit all communities in Canada.

Mr. Villeneuve took the opportunity to announce the upcoming launch of the Economic Development Fund in Sudbury on October 4<sup>th</sup>. "This fund was developed in a manner that fully meets the objectives of the conference," indicated Mr. Villeneuve. "It will become an essential economic development tool for Francophone populations in Ontario."

In conclusion, governments are invited to the fourth Federal-Provincial/Territorial Conference in Whitehorse, Yukon in 1998, to assess the progress of Francophone affairs initiatives and programs, and consolidate their objectives.

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