

**Ministerial Conferences on Francophone Affairs
Stanley Bridge (Prince Edward Island) - Octobre 12 and 13, 2000**

**GOVERNMENTS REAFFIRM THEIR COMMITMENT TO CANADA'S ACADIAN
AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES**

STANLEY BRIDGE, P.E.I. -- The provincial and territorial governments, together with the federal government, have agreed to strengthen relations with the country's Francophone and Acadian communities. This commitment came at the fifth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs held this week in Stanley Bridge, P.E.I.

Participants focussed on four particular areas: the visibility of Canada's French language and cultures, government commitment to fostering the vitality of Acadian and Francophone communities across Canada, early childhood development, and the future direction of the Ministerial Conference.

"I am proud to see the commitment of governments across Canada to promoting a greater appreciation of Acadian and Francophone communities. By doing so, we all contribute to enhancing the cultural richness and diversity of our country and to promoting a better understanding of Canada's linguistic duality and values among Canadians," stated Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Ministers expressed great interest in taking advantage of the upcoming opportunities to showcase Canada's Acadian and Francophone communities: The Games of La Francophonie to be held in Canada in 2001 and plans to commemorate four centuries of French presence in North America in 2004.

The ministers recognized the need to work with their counterparts in other departments to ensure that the interests of Acadian and Francophone communities are considered when dealing with a variety of issues, such as early childhood development.

"The challenges, aspirations and priorities of the Acadian and Francophone communities and the asset they represent are highlighted through dialogue and co-operation," said Mitch Murphy, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs for Prince Edward Island and chairman of the Conference. "Governments providing French language services and working in partnership with Acadian and Francophone communities can only enhance Canada's social fabric."

Ministerial Conferences on Francophone Affairs facilitate intergovernmental partnerships and co-operation on the development of Canada's Acadian and Francophone communities. These Conferences bring together representatives from the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Quebec took observer status at this meeting. The sixth conference will be held in Alberta in 2001.

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