

**Ministerial Conferences on Francophone Affairs
Moncton (New Brunswick) - Octobre 14 and 15, 2004**

Culture, Youth and Identity: Backdrop for a New Impetus to Intergovernmental Cooperation in Francophone Affairs

MONCTON—The ninth Ministerial Conference on Francophone Affairs, which is aimed at enhancing cooperation in regard to services in French and support for the Francophone and Acadian communities of Canada, was held yesterday and today.

The ministers and elected officials made a commitment to contribute to the development of the identity of Francophone youth by exploring, in cooperation with their colleagues responsible for education, innovative ways of putting more emphasis on culture in French-language schools.

“Ten years after the first Ministerial Conference, the provinces and territories are playing a key role in giving effect to Canada’s linguistic duality. We are working in close cooperation to exchange best practices, models and tools, enabling us to constantly improve our support to our respective communities,” stated the Honourable Percy Mockler, chair of the Conference and Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations for New Brunswick.

The ministers renewed their support for *Société Santé en français* and asked the federal government to provide long-term support for networking, professional training and the delivery of primary care to Francophones.

The ministers and elected officials also reiterated the urgency of renewing the federal – provincial/territorial agreements on intergovernmental collaboration in regard to official languages, while respecting the principles of asymmetry and flexibility, based on the needs and specific realities of each jurisdiction.

“I salute the progress made in all areas and I will endeavor to impress upon my federal minister colleagues the importance of increased collaboration with provincial and territorial governments in priority areas for the federal, provincial and territorial governments and the communities,” noted the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, federal minister responsible for Official Languages.

Participants applauded the recent passing of the French-Language Services Act in Nova Scotia.

The ministers also agreed to promote a research project on the achievements, models and impact of their actions in Francophonie-related matters.

Intergovernmental cooperation in Francophone Affairs mainly focuses on health, early childhood development, education, access to justice, economic development and strengthening of the Francophone collectivity.

The next ministerial conference will be in Saskatchewan, in the fall of 2005, as part of the celebrations marking that province’s centennial.