

Secretary of State Ronald J. Duhamel

Ronald J. Duhamel talks to **Canada World View**

Mr. Duhamel

One is TV5, the television network of La Francophonie. It now broadcasts in over 100 countries on five continents—even in the United States and Latin America—beaming our cultural diversity all over the planet.

We set up a Francophone Information Highway Fund to boost the economies of developing nations, among other things. We also set up FrancoNet in order to give all the countries of La Francophonie Internet access.

Further, in a host of areas our ties are becoming ever closer with the United Nations, the Commonwealth and other international organizations. That gives us greater influence and presence at the international level.

Canada World View

Let's talk about the theme of the Moncton Summit: youth. Why youth, and what do you expect in terms of tangible results?

Mr. Duhamel

Throughout the world, young people are most affected by the changes taking place at century's end: the technological revolution, the globalization of markets, environmental problems, the forming of economic blocs, the disappearance of traditional jobs and the emergence of new jobs.

Too many young people feel marginalized these days. They need help to take their rightful place in the world. Over the past few months we have consulted with hundreds of youths in a number of countries. Young people will be present at the Summit. Together we will examine concrete projects—for instance, expanding our scholarship programs and increasing the number of internships in such growth sectors as information technology, science and

administration—in order to help youths acquire hands-on experience. We will adopt and immediately implement an action plan with the participation of young people.

Canada World View

How do you see the future of La Francophonie?

Mr. Duhamel

I'm very optimistic. Four years ago, La Francophonie restructured itself and adopted new institutions. We are more efficient than before. With the creation of the Secretary-General position in 1995, we enhanced the political dimension of La Francophonie on the international scene. We are exerting greater influence and making an active, positive contribution to world affairs. For example, in the human security area, La Francophonie co-operates with other international organizations to provide election monitoring missions, as well as mediation and conflict resolution missions where requested by states experiencing conflicts or tensions. We want to expand on that role of La Francophonie so we can better strengthen human security around the world.

Canada World View

Only a third of the 500 million people of the French-speaking world actually speak French. What does the organization plan to do to increase the use of the French language internationally?

Mr. Duhamel

First I should say that we don't want



the other languages spoken in our member countries to disappear. We simply want to ensure wider use of French by promoting its teaching as a second language, by taking advantage of new technology to help propagate its use, and by encouraging the use of French in international organizations. In addition, the Journée internationale de la Francophonie, celebrated each year on March 20, helps raise awareness of La Francophonie throughout the world.

Canada World View

In closing, what does our membership in La Francophonie offer to Canadians?

Mr. Duhamel

It is of tremendous benefit to Canadians. Look at trade, for example. In 1998, we did nearly \$18 billion worth of business with our Francophonie partners, a rise of about 7 percent from 1997. La Francophonie is now our fifth-largest trading partner, right behind the Commonwealth. That means jobs for Canadians from one end of the country to the other. In the development assistance area alone, businesses and individuals from across Canada are winning contracts that enable them to transfer their skills and technology to some 50 countries. In the final analysis, belonging to La Francophonie means value added for all Canadians. ●