

LA FRANCOPHONIE

BACKGROUND

La Francophonie is an international organization created in the 1960's to provide a forum for multilateral cooperation and cultural exchange for countries where French is spoken or used.

Since the 1970's, Canada has played an active role in the organization both figuratively and financially in its commitment to promote French language and culture both at home and abroad. Today, it is one of 47 member states or countries that belongs to *la Francophonie*.

In addition to Canada itself, Quebec and New Brunswick, also have "participating government status in *la Francophonie* allowing them to play an active and distinctive role in the organization, in recognition of their large Francophone populations. Ontario and Manitoba are involved but represented as part of the Canadian delegation.

Canada's involvement in *la Francophonie* has become an integral part of Canada's foreign policy.

HOW IT OPERATES

Since 1986, regular meetings or summits of member countries have been held, and are now done so every two years. Canada has hosted a number of these conferences in Quebec City (1987) and in Montreal (1996), and is scheduled to hold a summit in Moncton, New Brunswick in September 1999.

At *la Francophonie* meetings, each country is represented by heads of state, with Canada's representation consisting of representatives from the federal government (for example, Department of External Affairs and International Trade) and the representatives of the provincial governments of Quebec and New Brunswick.

The purpose of these summits is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to mobilize the resources and funding needed to support the objectives and the priorities of the organization.