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Canada and La Francophonie

La Francophonie may be defined as the community of peoples who speak French or use it to various degrees, either in their own countries or internationally. It can also be viewed as an institutional framework of official and private organizations pursuing dialogue and co-operation in areas of activity and interest shared by the community's members. For some years the term "Francophonie" has been used to describe the movement that is working to provide an organized framework and functional structures of co-operation and exchange for those whose common language is French.

La Francophonie was founded on the French language, which is the basis of communication and promotion of the many francophone national cultures and languages. Although countries participating in the various French-speaking institutions usually have a common linguistic and cultural heritage, they are not homogeneous from a socio-cultural, political or economic viewpoint. Moreover, the diversity of national cultures and languages represented in the Francophone community is a dynamic factor in the development of La Francophonie and its activities.

The desire to bring together French-speaking people throughout the world has led to the creation of several international intergovernmental institutions — of which the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) is the most important — and to the establishment of non-governmental organizations and associations.

Role of the Canadian Government

The Canadian Government has been associated with La Francophonie from the outset, in the creation and development of its various institutions. The flourishing French culture in Canada and its broad international significance have provided considerable motivation for Canadian involvement in La Francophonie.

This involvement represents an international extension of Canada's bilingualism policy and constitutes a basic, permanent component of its foreign policy. In seeking to enhance the rich diversity of Canada, the federal government promotes French culture both domestically and abroad, striving to promote the employment of French as a means of communication, co-operation and understanding between the peoples who use it in varying degrees. To this end, it has established a system of bilateral diplomatic representation with all Francophone countries, produced an extensive development co-operation program, initiated a political dialogue on major international issues and has become a member of all multilateral francophone organizations, in particular the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation and two annual conferences: the Conference of Education Ministers (CONFEMEN) and the Conference of Minister of Youth and Sports (CONFESJES).