

FOR RELEASE
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Yukon and Quebec jointly support the development of French

Joint news release

WHITEHORSE—Elaine Taylor, Yukon's Deputy Premier and Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate, today welcomed Jean-Marc Fournier, Quebec's Minister responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie. Together, they signed a cooperation agreement and a declaration on the Canadian Francophonie, signaling their joint commitment to the continuity of the French language in Canada.

The renewed and enhanced cooperation agreement on the Canadian Francophonie—which for the first time includes money being earmarked over the next five years—testifies to the will of both governments to strengthen and maintain their close ties, and is based on a shared vision of the future of the French language in Canada.

Quebec and Yukon are committing to substantially increase their respective annual financial contribution for the implementation of major projects supporting the French language, including initiatives targeting health, culture, education and Francophone immigration. This contribution will amount to \$50,000 annually over each of the next five years. The two ministers have also made the commitment to meet at least once every two years to exchange views and discuss the Canadian Francophonie as well as the three-year action plan which will be developed to meet the needs and priorities identified by the community stakeholders, including the Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY).

"The future of the French language in Canada requires sustained efforts and close and active collaboration between governments. I would like to commend the Yukon government on its ongoing efforts to improve access to education in French in the territory. The financial commitment and today's declaration are further examples of the recognition of the French language as a fundamental characteristic of Canada's identity, and they bode well for the future," Minister Fournier said.

"The renewed agreement marks the mutual commitment of both our governments to work together with the community in key sectors of French language services and community development in the areas of education, early childhood, arts and culture, youth, economy, health, social services, tourism and immigration," Minister Taylor said. "This renewed partnership between the province of Quebec and Yukon will contribute to strengthening the vitality of the French language and Francophone cultures, as well as the growth of our own Yukon French-speaking community."

By signing the declaration on the Francophonie, the governments of Yukon and Quebec are committing to demonstrate leadership in the Canadian Francophonie, in a spirit of cooperation, openness and solidarity. They will work to promote the French language as a characteristic of Canada's identity and as a valuable asset by taking concrete action to maintain the demographic weight of Francophones in Canada and by encouraging the active offer of services in French.

"The AFY would like to commend the Québec and Yukon governments for signing this agreement, which will benefit the Yukon Francophone community. We wish to acknowledge Minister Elaine Taylor for her important work in representing our community in the Yukon and beyond," said AFY President Angélique Bernard.

These efforts are part of a national trend reflecting a strong commitment to the French language. Quebec signed a similar declaration with the Government of Ontario in November 2014 and, more recently, with the Government of Manitoba, on January 18, 2016. Quebec is determined to step up its efforts to promote the French language in Canada, and it hopes that these declarations will be the first in a long series.

"As a Quebecer, I would like to commend the Yukon government on its actions, which reflect the role that French will play in the Canada of tomorrow - an evolving and progressive one. A language that proudly wears its colors. Although challenges remain, we should celebrate our decision to work together for the benefit of the French language. Let us agree today to look together to the future and make Canada a country where French is not only a fundamental right, but also an advantage for every Canadian," Minister Fournier stated.

Earlier in the day, Ministers Fournier and Taylor met with leaders of several community organizations involved in the Canadian Francophonie, including the AFY and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon.

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