

**WELCOMING REMARKS
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF A MEETING WITH
FRANCOPHONE HEADS OF MISSION**

**OTTAWA
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Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Parliament Hill and to this meeting. I would particularly like to thank Ambassador Wone for his kind invitation to speak about my home province of New Brunswick and the special relationship it has with La Francophonie.

For over 40 years, Canada's membership in La Francophonie has been and continues to be a significant Canadian foreign policy priority. From human rights and democratic governance to technology and climate change, our governments have shown a commitment to tackling some of the world's most difficult challenges while fostering a strong international francophone community.

Since 1977, New Brunswick has also had the opportunity to contribute to this cause. The province, which is the only officially bilingual province in Canada, bases its participation in La Francophonie on its commitment to and respect for its francophone community, which accounts for 33% of its population.

New Brunswick served as host to the organization's 8th Summit held in Moncton in 1999. Since then, it has continued to promote issues related to youth, education and training, as well as communication technology within La Francophonie.

At the federal level, the importance of La Francophonie for Canada and New Brunswick is personified in our new Minister of State for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and la Francophonie, the Honourable Bernard Valcourt, Member of Parliament for Madawaska–Restigouche, New Brunswick.

The close partnership between Canada and New Brunswick with respect to La Francophonie highlights the importance of collaboration in matters pertaining to the preservation of language, heritage and culture.

As our governments endeavour to enhance this collaboration among members of La Francophonie, I want to thank all of you for making this movement and organization a priority.

I look forward to our discussion.