



OTTAWA DECLARATION

In the Name of a Healthy Francophonie

WE, the French-language health community stakeholders, **recognize** that:

- Under the *Canada Health Act*, all Canadians should be able to enjoy universal and comprehensive access to public health services that promote improved physical and mental well-being,
- The *Constitution of Canada*, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Official Languages Act* guarantee Francophone and Acadian minority communities the right to live, educate themselves and develop fully in their language and recognize that the health of communities is directly related to their vitality,
- Culture, and by extension language and minority setting, are among the principal determinants of the health of community members,
- Essential remedial steps have been taken over the years and some efforts have made it possible to provide access to French-language health services,
- Inequities and barriers to achieving the desired outcomes that are inherent in the circumstances of minority Francophone communities persist. In this connection, we should point out that:
 - The geographic dispersal of Francophones, the remoteness of some communities, and the economic problems of the regions where they live make these populations more vulnerable,
 - and make access to health services in their language difficult,
 - The lack of knowledge of French on the part of the majority of health professionals and the inability of health infrastructures to systematically serve Francophones in their language are barriers to obtaining quality services adapted to their needs and may cause delays, misdiagnoses, medical errors, and inadequate or inappropriate follow-up, in addition to causing needless expenses,
 - A chronic lack of reliable statistical data, especially data on health and social services, is a barrier to targeting the primary healthcare needs of Francophone and Acadian communities and to measuring progress,
 - Centralized management of health services on a geographic basis (regional, provincial or territorial) sometimes has the effect, to varying degrees, of reducing French-language health services provision to minority communities and minimizes Francophone involvement in the governance of the institutions supposed to serve them.

WE, the French-language health community stakeholders, **believe** that:

- 1 A vibrant language is one used on a daily basis and throughout one's entire life;
- 2 The full development of Francophone and Acadian communities makes it possible for its members to participate actively in the building of a more inclusive, prosperous and healthy Canadian society;
- 3 To understand how communities flourish, one must consider: the overall well-being of its members by promoting healthy living habits rather than focussing on remedial measures, a series of health prevention and promotion activities, garner a concerted approach by health care professionals to address health determinants and promote a healthy lifestyle;
- 4 Taking responsibility for the community's overall health is an essential step towards improving the health of individuals;
- 5 Healthcare systems in Canada must receive adequate support to allow for the integration of cultural and linguistic dimensions in patient care and services offer;
- 6 Health must be considered in its broadest terms and is essential to the vitality of Francophone minority communities.

WE, healthcare stakeholders in Francophone and Acadian communities, whose goal is to increase true access to healthcare programs and services in French, **commit** to:

- 7 Place the individual at the heart of all healthcare concerns in French, and to forge a reliable and trusting relationship wherein he or she is a partner in his or her own well-being and health, an active participant in finding solutions;
- 8 Create and grow French-language living spaces across the country so that Francophones and Acadians can continue their journey towards true equality; have these spaces reflect the dynamism and diversity of the community and be welcoming places for integration into the community;
- 9 Counter access barriers to healthcare services through innovation and an active offer of French-language programs and services to ensure the delivery of safe, integrated, and quality services that are culturally and linguistically adapted;
- 10 Grow the number of healthcare professionals trained in French, and support the development of stimulating working and living environments that encourage personal and professional development in French;
- 11 Promote, develop and disseminate reliable research and data collection about Francophone minority communities in order to paint an accurate portrait of community health in order to better plan services;
- 12 Engage partners in government, education, healthcare professions and community service providers, towards a concerted strategic approach adapted to the realities of the Canadian Francophonie, the creation of evaluation tools and appropriate reporting mechanisms that respond to the specific needs of the community; and
- 13 Assert our place on the international stage to promote our exemplary practices beyond our borders in order to create ties with other minority language communities, and to benefit from best practices throughout the world.