



News Release

2007 Western Premiers' Conference Iqaluit, Nunavut - July 4 - 6, 2007

IQALUIT, July 6, 2007 - Western Premiers met in the easternmost capital of their seven jurisdictions during a couple of the longest days of the Arctic year to address the unique challenges of rural and remote communities in western and northern Canada.

During their visit to Nunavut, Premiers had the opportunity to meet with the executive members of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Inuit organization representing the beneficiaries of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Premiers flew to the Baffin Island community of Pangnirtung to assess the opportunities and challenges faced by small communities in the North and to view first hand the beauty of that community situated across the fiord from Auyuittuq National Park.

NORTHERN VISION

Western Premiers discussed *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada* – the first home-grown vision document written by Northerners about the North and released by Northern Premiers in May 2007.

Western Premiers support the Territories as they pursue the priorities identified in the Northern Vision: promoting Arctic sovereignty through sustainable northern communities; planning and investing in climate change adaptation; and, ensuring Northerners have a voice in Canada's circumpolar activities.

NORTHERN DEVOLUTION

Territories, like provinces, should manage and control the scope and pace of natural resource development and should be the primary beneficiaries of this development. Premiers agree that working toward a prosperous, sustainable, and secure North is in the best interests of Canada as a whole.

Western Premiers believe a federal mandate for devolution negotiations for Nunavut should be established by this fall and a devolution agreement concluded within two years. The Northwest Territories has been pursuing devolution for 20 years and the time has come to finalize an Agreement.

The devolution agreements should include the transfer of powers over northern lands, water and resources, including a fair share of resource revenues. Devolution would be a

significant step towards the Prime Minister's initiative to recognize the importance of the North in Canada.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

Western Premiers discussed the issues and challenges faced by rural, remote and Aboriginal communities in western and northern Canada. They recognize that the vitality of these diverse communities benefits Canada economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally.

Canada's vast landscape leaves many rural and remote communities in western and northern Canada without sufficient transportation infrastructure to connect regional economies, resources and markets. Economic development and the provision of vital services such as health care depend on adequate transportation networks and basic community infrastructure.

Premiers note the need to increase the participation of rural, remote and Aboriginal residents in education and skills training. With the necessary skills, rural, remote and Aboriginal residents in western and northern Canada can better take advantage of the economic opportunities offered in their regions. Governments have developed or are developing specific actions within their respective labour force strategies for these communities.

To be sustainable, rural, remote and Aboriginal communities in western and northern Canada need diversified economies, adequate infrastructure and educated, skilled populations.

Premiers agree to focus, in the coming months, on key aspects of sustaining rural, remote and Aboriginal communities, including:

- water supply and quality,
- education from early childhood to Grade 12,
- affordable, clean and alternate forms of energy, and
- transportation.

THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF SOVEREIGNTY

Western Premiers recognize that Northerners are the embodiment – the human dimension – of Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

For Northerners to continue to act as stewards of Canadian sovereignty, the North needs sustainable communities. It is in the national interest to support Northerners in building communities where they can live healthy lives; where opportunities for education, training and employment exist; and where they can raise families in adequate, suitable

and affordable homes. All Canadians should have access to adequate health and social services.

ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

Western Premiers remain committed to the principles and objectives established in the First Ministers' Meeting with Aboriginal Leaders in November 2005 to close the significant gap between the quality of life measures of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada and other Canadians, particularly for health, education, housing and economic opportunity.

Western Premiers support the recently announced federal Specific Claims Resolution Process and commit to working with First Nations and the federal government to achieve timely resolution in settling outstanding specific claims. Western Premiers encourage the federal government to also identify ways to work with provinces, territories and Aboriginal partners on expediting resolution of all outstanding claims, including comprehensive claims.

Premiers believe that implementation of Land Claims Agreements is a critical component of long term success. Where there are comprehensive land claims in place, such as in Yukon and Nunavut, Premiers encourage Canada to immediately move to full implementation of the agreements.

Western Premiers hold a continued interest in sharing best practices and approaches to the development and implementation of initiatives regarding consultation with Aboriginal governments and communities in their respective jurisdictions.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a serious and urgent problem affecting all jurisdictions now. Cooperation is the key to effective adaptation with respect to regional impacts of climate change. Premiers are committed to taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change within their jurisdictions and to coordinate their actions regionally.

Premiers direct Ministers of Transport to develop strategies to implement E-85 highways on the Trans-Canada Highway (#1) and the Yellowhead (#16).

Western Premiers agree to explore a regional approach to climate change that includes developing a consistent standard for the measurement of greenhouse gas emissions. Premiers agree to coordinate research and action on adaptation and support biofuels research, production and use.

With respect to climate change adaptation, Premiers will reconvene in Vancouver early in the new year. Western jurisdictions will build on existing partnerships, initiatives and knowledge, take immediate actions and work together to:

- develop capacity to mainstream adaptation into government decision-making;
- strengthen and increasingly engage with existing research networks;
- share and coordinate research on wildlife sustainability; and
- assess the costs and opportunities associated with climate change adaptation.

HEALTHY LIVING

Chronic diseases account for more than two-thirds of deaths in Canada, and are linked to common risk factors, including physical inactivity, poor diet, smoking, and the underlying environmental and cultural factors that influence personal habits. Western Premiers are committed to promoting healthy and active living among their citizens.

Last year, Western Premiers established the Western and Northern Canadian Collaborative for Healthy Living, a working group to share best practices and resources, capitalize on synergies, identify gaps, seek joint opportunities, and take advantage of existing programs and initiatives.

Western Premiers direct the Western and Northern Canadian Collaborative for Healthy Living to develop a three year plan to highlight the importance of physical activity and healthy living including building on marquee events such as the 2008 Arctic Games, the 2008 North American Indigenous Games and the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver.

Premiers are committed to work with British Columbia to take full advantage of economic and cultural promotion activities in association with the 2010 Olympics.

2008 WESTERN PREMIERS' CONFERENCE

Premier Calvert announces that the 2008 Western Premiers' Conference will take place May 28-30, 2008, in Saskatchewan.

As part of the ongoing collaboration between Western Premiers and Western Governors, the Governors of the member states of the Western Governors' Association are invited to attend Western Premiers' Conferences every second year.

-30-

Contact information:

Karen Kabloona
Press Secretary, Premier's Office
Government of Nunavut
867-975-5059