



COMMUNIQUÉ

Northern Premiers' Forum

IQALUIT, September 5, 2009 – The premiers of Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories met today in Iqaluit to discuss international and domestic issues of importance to the people of Canada's North.

OUR SHARED NORTHERN VISION

Premiers renewed the Northern Co-operation Accord, continuing their formal commitment to work together on issues of common interest. With the growing interest in Canada's North, premiers reiterated the importance of Northern voices and interests being heard by their provincial colleagues, the Government of Canada, and international audiences.

Premiers are pleased to see the territories' Northern Vision reflected in "Canada's Northern Strategy" and called upon Prime Minister Stephen Harper and federal ministers to engage northern governments to ensure its success. The 2007 pan-territorial "Northern Vision: A Stronger North a Better Canada" articulates the priorities of the territories and provides guidance for the implementation of the Northern Strategy.

Maintaining healthy, sustainable communities in partnership with the federal government continues to be a priority for premiers. Continued health care funding, housing, skills and training, and the effective northern involvement in the new Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) are practical examples of ways the territories can work with Canada to implement the goals of the Northern Vision and Northern Strategy.

Strategic Infrastructure Investment and the Economy

Economic development and diversification are essential to making our northern economies and communities strong and sustainable. Strategic partnerships with Canada in infrastructure and economic development investments are essential to developing the North's vast potential.

Premiers noted the need for a federal/territorial collaborative effort to ensure CanNor's strategy for economic development meets northern priorities.

Premiers continue to invest in infrastructure and this requires Canada to work in partnership with the territories to build a stronger Canada. Premiers called on the federal government to join them in exploring new mechanisms aimed at providing the infrastructure required for the North.

Skills Training and Employment

Building on the opportunity presented by the Employment Insurance reforms proposed at the Western Premiers' Conference in June as well as the Council of the Federation meeting in August, Premiers committed to exploring methods of ensuring that the federal EI program better suits the reality and situation of northern employment, economies, and communities. Premiers also discussed the challenges also face by northerners in accessing skills training and employment opportunities.

Health

In its recently released Northern Strategy, Canada committed to ensure that “territorial health systems are more responsive to northerners’ needs, patient wait times are reduced and community level access to services is improved”. To address this priority, premiers emphasized the need for a new five-year Territorial Health Fund as a means of renewing the Territorial Health System Sustainability Initiative. The current funding agreement expires in April, 2010. The funding sought will support transformative change within each territory’s health system, and will further the innovative work being undertaken to improve the health status of northerners. The fund would also contribute to the costs of medical travel. A new Territorial Health Fund will assist Canada in achieving its priorities for increased economic and social development within a strong North.

Premiers also discussed H1N1 and the preparations that territories have taken to limit the spread of the virus. Premiers acknowledged the work being done by health departments and public health agencies across the North to deal with the H1N1 virus. Premiers remind residents of the importance of simple preventative measures to protect themselves and prevent the spread of H1N1.

Premiers are committing human and financial resources to help prevent and combat the spread of the H1N1 virus. However, it is acknowledged that responding to H1N1 effectively requires strong cooperation and coordination of efforts by all orders of government and community leaders.

Higher Learning and Research: A Northern-Based Knowledge Sector

Premiers recognized the importance of research and innovation in building healthy and sustainable northern communities, growing regional economies and improving environmental science and stewardship. In particular, premiers acknowledged the need for the territories to work together to develop the knowledge and innovation sectors across the North to ensure adequate research is available to guide adaption to climate change.

Northern governments, northern research institutions, and northerners themselves, must play a role in setting the research agenda for the North, as well as the development and implementation of long-term programs supporting research and monitoring in the North.

Premiers committed to examine options for the development of a northern university that would contribute to northern social, economic and cultural development and provide opportunities for more northerners to obtain the education and research skills fundamental in today's knowledge-based global economy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Premiers reiterated that the impact of global climate change is being felt most acutely in the North. As such, governments in Canada, and internationally, need to implement effective measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and anticipate and prepare for climate change impacts. Premiers discussed actions aimed at addressing these objectives both within Canada and abroad.

Climate Change Adaptation

Premiers agreed that, in addition to ongoing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is also vital to develop strategies to adapt to the effects of climate change. This will require innovative partnerships among territories, with the federal government, Aboriginal governments and organizations, academic institutions and other jurisdictions. Specifically, territorial governments are working on adaptation initiatives and will formalize this through a pan-territorial adaptation strategy by the end of 2010.

Arctic Council

The Arctic Council has become the primary international institution that addresses issues of importance to the Arctic. Premiers emphasized the important role territorial governments must play in the Arctic Council. Premier Aariak, Premier Roland and Deputy Yukon Premier Elaine Taylor participated as members of the Canadian delegation at the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Tromso, Norway.

Climate change adaptation, persistent organic pollutants, and sustainable community development are just a few of the challenges addressed by the Arctic Council that territorial governments face directly. Premiers also announced their intention to invite the Canadian Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council to a meeting to discuss the shared vision territorial governments have with Aboriginal peoples in the circumpolar region.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an important element in the international effort to implement measures to address climate change. Premiers recognized the federal government's effort at engaging provinces and territories in consultations prior to the

international negotiations at the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP15). Northern governments have accepted the federal government's invitation to take an active role in the development of the Canadian position and join the Canadian delegation in Copenhagen at the COP 15 meeting in December.

Premiers hope to see, through the international negotiations, an environmentally effective agreement that includes measurable, reportable and verifiable commitments, covering the vast majority of emissions in developed and developing countries.

Renewable Energy

Premiers recognized the importance of continuing to develop renewable energy sources to ensure long-term environmental and economic sustainability. Territorial governments are investing significant resources in renewable projects and premiers, in cooperation with stakeholders including aboriginal governments and organizations, and industry, have committed to developing a pan-territorial renewable energy inventory that will contain current and future renewable energy sources such as hydro, geothermal, wind, solar and biomass.

Premiers also made a commitment to expand efforts on renewable energy development in the North by forming new partnerships to explore initiatives such as a North-South grid and investment in new technology or the adaptation of existing technology to better serve the citizens of the North.

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