



## **COMMUNIQUÉ** **Northern Premiers' Forum**

### **Premiers continue to build a stronger North and a better Canada**

**IQALUIT, Nunavut (June 27, 2012)** - Territorial Premiers met in Iqaluit for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Northern Premiers' Forum on June 26 and 27 to continue to implement their shared vision of a stronger North and a better Canada.

Premiers noted that *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada*, released in 2007, continues to guide their pan-territorial approach to ensuring a prosperous and sustainable North that will benefit northerners and all Canadians.

Premiers emphasized the importance of partnerships in continuing to strengthen the North and support Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

#### **Arctic Council**

As the federal government prepares to chair the Arctic Council in 2013, Premiers confirmed they want to participate more directly with the federal government in shaping Arctic Council priorities that address critical northern needs.

Consistent with commitments stated in the *Northern Vision*, Premiers considered Canada's chairmanship as a significant opportunity for northern voices to be heard in building sustainable communities, adapting to climate change and strengthening circumpolar relations.

Premiers stressed the value of supporting Arctic research and science to inform decision-making that will benefit northern communities, economies and the environment.

Premiers stated the federal government could showcase the territories' economies, traditions and cultures by hosting Arctic Council meetings in the North, culminating with the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in 2015.

Premiers also discussed shared interests with representatives of the Canadian Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council, including the reinstatement of the position of circumpolar ambassador. Premiers recognize the vital role of the Permanent Participants and welcome opportunities to work together to improve the lives of northerners through the work of the Arctic Council.

#### **Northern Search and Rescue**

Premiers were pleased that the federal government signed the Arctic Council's *Agreement on Co-operation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in*

*the Arctic*. The need for a consistent, coordinated search and rescue regime is vital in the North where resources are limited and search operations are often conducted hundreds or thousands of kilometres from the nearest major centre.

Premiers stated that improvements to Canada's Arctic search and rescue capabilities North of 60 are necessary to prepare for the increased pressures of resource development activity and growing air and marine traffic, and to demonstrate Arctic sovereignty.

Premiers look forward to working with the federal government and Arctic search and rescue partners to ensure that Canadians are protected no matter where they travel in our vast country.

### **Nutrition North Canada**

For many communities in the North, the high cost of living continues to have an impact on the food security and health of northern families.

Premiers appreciated the benefits that Nutrition North Canada's subsidies provided to northern residents but pointed out that across the territories, concerns continue to be raised about the high cost of food. Premiers urged the federal government to monitor Nutrition North Canada Program for its effectiveness and ensure it achieves its goals.

In particular, Premiers stated the importance of improving information about the program for northern communities, including further community visits and clearer information materials.

### **Northern Residents' Deduction**

Premiers recognized that the cost of living in the North has substantially increased since the Northern Residents' Reduction was introduced. Premiers called on the federal government to increase the deduction and index it against the cost of living in the territories to help ensure that taxpayers in northern Canada pay a similar proportion of their income in federal tax as taxpayers in southern Canada.

### **Health Funding**

Premiers stressed the importance of addressing the continuing needs of northern health care systems to meet the extraordinary and unique challenges, conditions and costs of providing health care and access to that care for territorial residents that is comparable to the rest of Canada.

### **Infrastructure for Northern Economic Development**

Federal funding provided through the Building Canada Plan has enabled significant progress on upgrading and improving community and transportation infrastructure in the North. Territorial involvement in the identification of priority infrastructure projects was key to the success of this program.

Premiers discussed the importance of working with the federal government in making coordinated and strategic investments, including infrastructure, through other programs such as CanNor to maximize benefits for northerners.

In keeping with their shared vision for a stronger and more sustainable North, Premiers committed to continuing to work in partnership with the federal government on the renewal and development of federal infrastructure funding programs to better respond to territorial and regional needs.

Premiers urged the federal government to recognize the unique challenges of infrastructure development in Canada's North, including the many significant effects of climate change and the needs of remote communities, and emphasized meeting energy needs to support growing economies.

Premiers agreed that sustainable, predictable and flexible infrastructure funding enables strategic investment that maximizes economic benefits, creates new and lasting jobs in communities, increases competitiveness and improves critical services. Premiers called for a "base-funding plus per capita" formula as the most effective mechanism for infrastructure investment and for addressing the ongoing northern infrastructure deficit, especially in Nunavut.

### **Resource Industry Training**

Northern resource development is a key economic driver in the NWT, Yukon and Nunavut. There are several mines operating in the North employing thousands, and this is just the beginning. With 20 or more mining operations at the advanced stage of development, the demand for skilled workers will exceed the available work force. Premiers agreed it is important that investments are made to continue to develop a skilled and productive northern workforce with transferable skills to enable all northern residents to benefit from these opportunities.

Premiers committed to working together to advance a pan-territorial approach to resource industry training. This approach, to be successful, must include a strong federal funding partner and must be developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and industry partners.

### **Devolution**

Premiers once again stressed that the social and economic development of the territories depends on devolving control over lands and resources from the federal government.

The territories' lands and resources belong to northerners and must be managed, developed and protected according to northerners' needs and priorities. Devolution is essential to building prosperous, resilient and self-reliant communities throughout Canada's North.

Premiers urged the federal government to complete devolution in the Northwest Territories and continue to advance devolution in Nunavut as part of its efforts to bring certainty to citizens and industry alike.

### **Canadian Energy Strategy**

Premiers noted they were looking forward to a discussion at the Council of the Federation summer meeting on the development of a Canadian Energy Strategy for Sustainable Energy Management and Development that will ensure Canada is a leader in energy production, supply and transportation.

While there is strong and growing export potential for Canada's energy resources including those in the Arctic, Premiers emphasized that a Canadian Energy Strategy should also focus on meeting Canada's domestic energy needs by ensuring a secure, sustainable, reliable and competitively-priced supply of energy for all Canadians.

Premiers also re-stated their support for east-west and northern electricity transmission being included in such a strategy, as proposed by the Western Premiers at their May 2012 meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The 2013 Northern Premiers' Forum will be held in Yukon.