



Northern Premiers meet virtually to discuss priorities in the North, including Healthcare, Infrastructure, Education, and Climate Change

Truth and Reconciliation

This statement may be triggering. All territories are directly impacted by residential schooling or intergenerational trauma. Premiers are united in the need to speak out about this reality. The confirmation of the unmarked remains of Indigenous children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School is not just a reminder of a dark chapter of Canadian history. This continues to impact the people of the Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut. There is a continued need to support Indigenous Peoples at all levels of government to move towards reconciliation. Premiers agree that a great deal of work remains to address reconciliation, which must be rooted in truth, justice, and existing Calls to Action and Calls for Justice that have been informed through national inquiries.

Northern reopening

Premiers discussed reopening plans and efforts made in each of the territories to reopen gradually and safely. Premiers acknowledge that public health measures have been difficult on all northern residents; however, it is through these measures and the resiliency of northerners that we have kept ourselves safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Premiers noted that a higher vaccine uptake, both within and outside the territories, would allow for further easing of public health measures and a return of travellers to the North. Premiers urged all residents who are eligible to receive a vaccine to get one as soon as possible. Vaccines remain a critical aspect of reopening safely and mitigating the risk for northern residents and communities.

Premiers discussed the supports and initiatives their governments are undertaking to help the tourism industry recover from the pandemic given the importance this sector plays on Northern economies. They also discussed the continued collaboration with the federal government during the pandemic and partnerships developed to support the reopening of the North.

Long-term, predictable healthcare funding needed

Premiers appreciate federal investments for healthcare, including supports critical to fight the pandemic. Premiers acknowledge that the global pandemic has put immense pressure on the healthcare capacity of all Canadian jurisdictions.

The pandemic has amplified the urgent need for additional resources to address mental health and addictions challenges, as well as to tackle the backlog of surgeries and appointments caused by the pandemic. A strong partnership is required between all

levels of government to ensure that territorial residents receive the best possible healthcare given the unique needs of the North. Premiers agreed on the need for long-term, predictable funding that is reflective of the healthcare delivery systems of the three territories.

The Canada Health Transfer provides long-term, predictable funding for healthcare. The territories require additional healthcare funds that are flexible and adequate to address higher costs of delivery related to small populations, distances and socio-economic gaps that are prevalent in the North.

Infrastructure and Housing remain priorities for Northern Premiers

Premiers discussed the state of infrastructure in the North and highlighted the importance of addressing the infrastructure deficits faced by Northern communities, which have a significant social and economic impact on residents, governments and economic development.

Premiers agreed on the need for ongoing federal investments in and development of key infrastructure to support economic drivers. This includes but is not limited to investments in marine ports, airports, roads, telecommunications, housing, hydroelectric power and renewable energy infrastructure. Ensuring infrastructure needs are met is part of nation-building, continuing responsible development and prosperity, and meeting the priorities and realities of the North.

Premiers understand that access to adequate, affordable and suitable housing is intrinsically linked with all aspects of an individual's well-being, including health, education and employment. Premiers acknowledge that lack of adequate housing in the North not only impacts individuals but also communities. Enhanced federal support, assistance, and collaboration for the provision of social housing in the North is critical.

Furthering Post-Secondary Education in the North

Premiers discussed the importance of education for Northerners, and how investments made in post-secondary education will provide opportunities for Northerners to advance their education and skills and at the same time develop local labour markets and economies.

Supporting a highly skilled Northern work force that is resilient and equipped to contribute to the economic growth of the territories remains a priority for Premiers. Continued collaboration by Yukon University, Nunavut Arctic College and Aurora College as it transforms to a polytechnic university, will help provide a strong foundation to implement Northern focused programs that further economic and social recovery through a stronger and more diversified labour force.

Premiers also took the opportunity to recognize the launch of Yukon University in May 2020.

Premiers discussed Climate Change across the North

Canada's North is warming three times faster than the global average, with changes affecting many aspects of Northern life and communities. Premiers are engaging Indigenous leaders on the climate conversation with the goal of speaking with one Northern voice. Premiers recognize the growing urgency to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, as well as shift to cleaner energy. They discussed the need for adequate, flexible, and coordinated federal supports in this response. This includes funding to establish a Northern Climate Services Hub that will support the territories' knowledge needs to adapt to a changing climate while creating important jobs in the North.

Addressing the increased incidences of natural disasters and infrastructure deterioration as the result of climate change remains a challenge in the North. Premiers recognize that the cultural and socio-economic components to the impact of climate change create tremendous challenges for communities. Flooding, wildfires, erosion, and permafrost thaw remain a challenge as we work to mitigate and adapt to these impacts throughout the territories.

The Arctic and Northern Policy Framework for the Territories

Premiers are interested to proceed with the implementation of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. Premiers recognized the importance of robust investment plans in key priority areas to address each of the territories' specific social and economic issues post-pandemic in the short term and strategic priorities in the long term.

The Arctic and Northern Policy Framework is an important tool for advancing shared interests between territorial, Indigenous, and federal governments. The Framework should remain flexible to the unique needs of the territories to ensure maximum effectiveness in its implementation.

Premiers Sign a Renewed Northern Cooperation Accord

In reflecting on the challenges of the past fifteen months, Premiers noted the positive outcomes achieved through pan-territorial collaboration. Be it through their advocacy for federal investments in health care to support the COVID-19 response, or their efforts to secure timely and adequate vaccine doses for their residents, Northern Premiers agreed that we are stronger together.

Premiers honoured their commitment to territorial collaboration today by signing the Northern Cooperation Accord. This five-year agreement is the basis for cooperation between the three territorial governments, ensuring they work together on matters of mutual concern, and speak with a common voice on shared priorities.

Yukon was confirmed as host for Northern Premiers' Forum in 2022.

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