



THE COUNCIL OF  
ATLANTIC PREMIERS  
LE CONSEIL DES PREMIERS  
MINISTRES DE L'ATLANTIQUE

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## COMMUNIQUE

**St. John's, November 8, 2001** – Regional cooperation, health care and economic development topped the agenda of today's Council of Atlantic Premiers' meeting held in St. John's, Newfoundland. Atlantic Premiers released *Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Co-operation*, and discussed health care and economic development issues, particularly the Canada-US softwood lumber dispute.

The Premiers also agreed to work collaboratively on an economic development strategy for Atlantic Canada and agree to call on the regional federal ministers to work with them in the development of a collective Atlantic economic development agenda.

### ***Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Co-operation***

*Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Co-operation* outlines an agenda aimed at strengthening regional competitiveness and improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of public services to Atlantic Canadians.

The Action Plan focuses on two priority areas: improved quality and efficiency of government services in health, education and skills development, and protection of the region's environment; and, stronger competitiveness through reduced barriers to business, expanded research and development and energy capabilities, and promotion of the region in the global marketplace.

The plan is a working document that will evolve over time. In addition to the details outlined in the plan, the Atlantic Premiers will continue to explore new avenues of government-to-government co-operation, and pursue co-operation opportunities with the private sector.

The Premiers committed to completing the initiatives outlined in the Action Plan by the end of 2003. The annual report of the Council of Atlantic Premiers will report the status of these co-operation efforts.

### ***Health Care***

At the meeting, Premiers outlined their priorities for the upcoming national Premiers' Conference on Health scheduled for Vancouver, B.C. in January. At this meeting, Premiers will review

initiatives either undertaken or planned by provinces and territories to ensure effective and sustainable delivery continues in the face of growing financial pressures and inadequate federal financial contributions.

Premiers reiterated their call for a strengthened Equalization program, including a permanent removal of the ceiling, establishment of a 10-province standard, and comprehensive revenue coverage.

### ***Economic Development***

Premiers also discussed economic development in the region, and committed to an open dialogue with the federal government on new initiatives to promote economic development in Atlantic Canada. Premiers called upon the federal government to work co-operatively with their governments. They invited the four federal regional ministers to meet with them to discuss co-operative approaches to build the Atlantic economy in four specific areas: training and skills development; research and development and innovation; strategic infrastructure; and a more competitive business environment.

Atlantic Premiers also reaffirmed their commitment to a unified Atlantic position on the Canada-US softwood lumber dispute which is no countervail or anti-dumping duties or export tax, and pledged to continue their close work with the Maritime Lumber Bureau on this issue. Premiers said they are counting on the federal government to protect the interests of this region.

Atlantic Premiers also discussed shipbuilding and called on the federal government to finalize their position on a national shipbuilding policy.

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For highlights of the Action Plan, please refer to the attached backgrounder.

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**Backgrounder: Highlights from *Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Co-operation***

***Efficiency and Quality to the Citizens of Atlantic Canada***

**Health Care** – Atlantic Premiers are committed to continued collaboration in support of a sustainable, publicly-funded health care system. The Action Plan identifies new initiatives including the establishment of a unified drug review process for Atlantic Canada and additional funding for the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre.

**Education and Skills Development** – To enhance co-operation on education and skills development within the region, the four Premiers will work towards the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium, undertake initiatives to increase literacy, develop on-line learning opportunities, and develop an Atlantic approach to student financial assistance.

**Environment** – Atlantic Premiers will work as partners in the national climate change process, in addition to ongoing efforts through the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers. The four Premiers are also committed to regional environmental protection and management activities through the establishment of the Pesticide Education Working Group.

***Increased Economic Competitiveness***

**Reducing Barriers to Business** – Atlantic Premiers identified three key areas for regional harmonization of regulations, policies and procedures that will cut duplication and red tape. These include a harmonized trucking strategy, the establishment of an Atlantic E-Government Committee, and harmonized government procurement policies.

**Research and Innovation** – Atlantic Premiers recognized the need to build strategic research and innovation areas to spur technology cluster development in Atlantic Canada. The provinces will work with the federal government, universities and other institutions to increase the Atlantic share of national research and innovation funding, and foster a climate of innovation in the region.

**Energy** – Atlantic Premiers will ensure the energy sector in Atlantic Canada responds to emerging challenges and opportunities through the establishment of an Atlantic Ministers' Forum on Energy. The Forum mandate will encourage regional co-operation in promoting exploration and development of energy resources, ensuring security of supply, providing reliable, affordable and competitive energy sources, and promoting safety and environmental protection. The Forum will encourage the development of alternative energy, promote renewable energy sources, enhance business development, and advance infrastructure planning for regional exchange of energy.