



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNIQUÉ

Pictou, Nova Scotia, November 29, 2010 – Atlantic premiers today committed to renew and strengthen cooperation by advancing common positions on national issues and exploring opportunities to realize direct benefits for citizens of all four provinces.

Premiers agreed on the need to explore ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services and to examine additional opportunities for joint procurement of goods and services.

Premier Darrell Dexter chaired the meeting that was attended by his Atlantic colleagues, Premiers David Alward of New Brunswick, Danny Williams of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island.

Premiers welcomed Premier David Alward to his first meeting of the Council. The premiers took this opportunity to thank Premier Williams for his substantial contribution to the success of the Council and the prosperity of the Atlantic region and to wish him well in his future endeavours.

Atlantic Renewable Energy Cooperation

The term sheet between Newfoundland and Labrador's Nalcor Energy and Nova Scotia's Emera Inc. to develop the first phase of the Lower Churchill Project and connect it to the Maritime provinces will provide clean, renewable energy to the region and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from electricity generation.

The letter of intent between Emera Inc. and NB Power provides a framework for enhancing both provinces' transmission capacity, and the agreement reached between NB Power and Maritime Electric will provide energy to PEI at stable and predictable prices.

Each of these arrangements enhances the potential of the Atlantic provinces to become an energy powerhouse that can supply clean energy to not only Atlantic Canada, but also Eastern Canada and the Northeastern United States.

Realizing the full potential for energy development in Atlantic Canada will require greater integration of Atlantic Canada's energy networks. The Atlantic Energy Gateway (AEG) initiative is providing an opportunity to explore key issues facing the region's electricity sector, including the economic benefits of regional system planning, market opportunities in the emerging green energy sector, regulatory issues, and research and development opportunities. Premiers look forward to reviewing the recommendations that will arise from this work.

Premiers directed their ministers responsible for energy to finalize the terms of reference for the Atlantic Energy Gateway initiative and proceed with the studies in support of regional cooperation on developing clean and renewable energy in the region.

The Atlantic premiers welcomed the federal government's support for the AEG initiative and feel strongly that it should continue to be an important partner in the process of developing new energy resources and system integration to meet the industrial, economic and environmental goals of the Atlantic region and Canada.

Sustainable and Quality Health Care and Federal Transfer Renewal

Premiers acknowledged the successes of regional cooperation in health care, such as the Atlantic Common Drug Review and the Atlantic Radiation Therapy MOU, and agreed that Atlantic Canada must continue to build on these efforts. They directed their ministers responsible for health to explore means of sustaining the quality and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health care delivery and to report back at the next Council meeting.

Equally important to the discussion on health care was the renewal of federal transfers as provinces and territories operate in an environment of declining revenues and rising costs. The federal government has indicated that the current arrangements for Equalization, the Canada Health Transfer (CHT), the Canada Social Transfer (CST) and the Equal-Per-Jurisdiction base funding (EPJ) will expire on March 31, 2014. The renewal of these transfers will have significant impact on each province's capacity to continue to provide essential health, education and social services to their citizens.

The Council of Atlantic Premiers committed to work together to ensure the stability, predictability and adequacy of future federal transfers while acknowledging the unique characteristics of each province.

Employment Insurance

The Council of Atlantic Premiers shared concerns about the expiry of a number of long-standing Employment Insurance pilot projects, as the termination of these projects will negatively impact unemployed persons and will reduce the labour supply for seasonal industries.

Premiers called on the federal government to make the Extended EI Benefits, Best of 14 Weeks, Working-While-on-Claim and the New/Re-Entrants pilot projects permanent features of the Employment Insurance system.

Premiers agreed on the importance of providing appropriate training opportunities for Atlantic Canada's workforce to address specific needs and skill shortages in the region.

The Council of Atlantic Premiers feels strongly that the federal government must ensure that efforts to reduce federal deficits do not result in a diminishment of its capacity to respond appropriately to local needs and circumstances.

Immigration

A responsive federal immigration policy is necessary to assist provinces that are experiencing slower population growth. Atlantic premiers are concerned that federal immigration policies are not taking into consideration the specific needs of the Atlantic provinces. As a first step, the Atlantic premiers call on the federal government to remove the cap on their Provincial Nominee Programs.

Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

Premiers discussed the status of ongoing negotiations towards a comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. The negotiations provide an opportunity to deal with outstanding trade irritants including tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian fish, seafood and frozen agricultural food products. Premiers agreed to write to the federal government to urge them to negotiate the removal of these trade irritants to ensure real market access to Europe.

Venture Capital

Entrepreneurism is key to regional economic growth and diversification. Premiers directed their ministers to investigate opportunities for mutual benefit from an Atlantic Canada regional venture capital fund.

Next Meeting

Premier Alward invited his Atlantic colleagues to attend the next meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, which will be held May 15-16, 2011 in Sussex, New Brunswick.

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