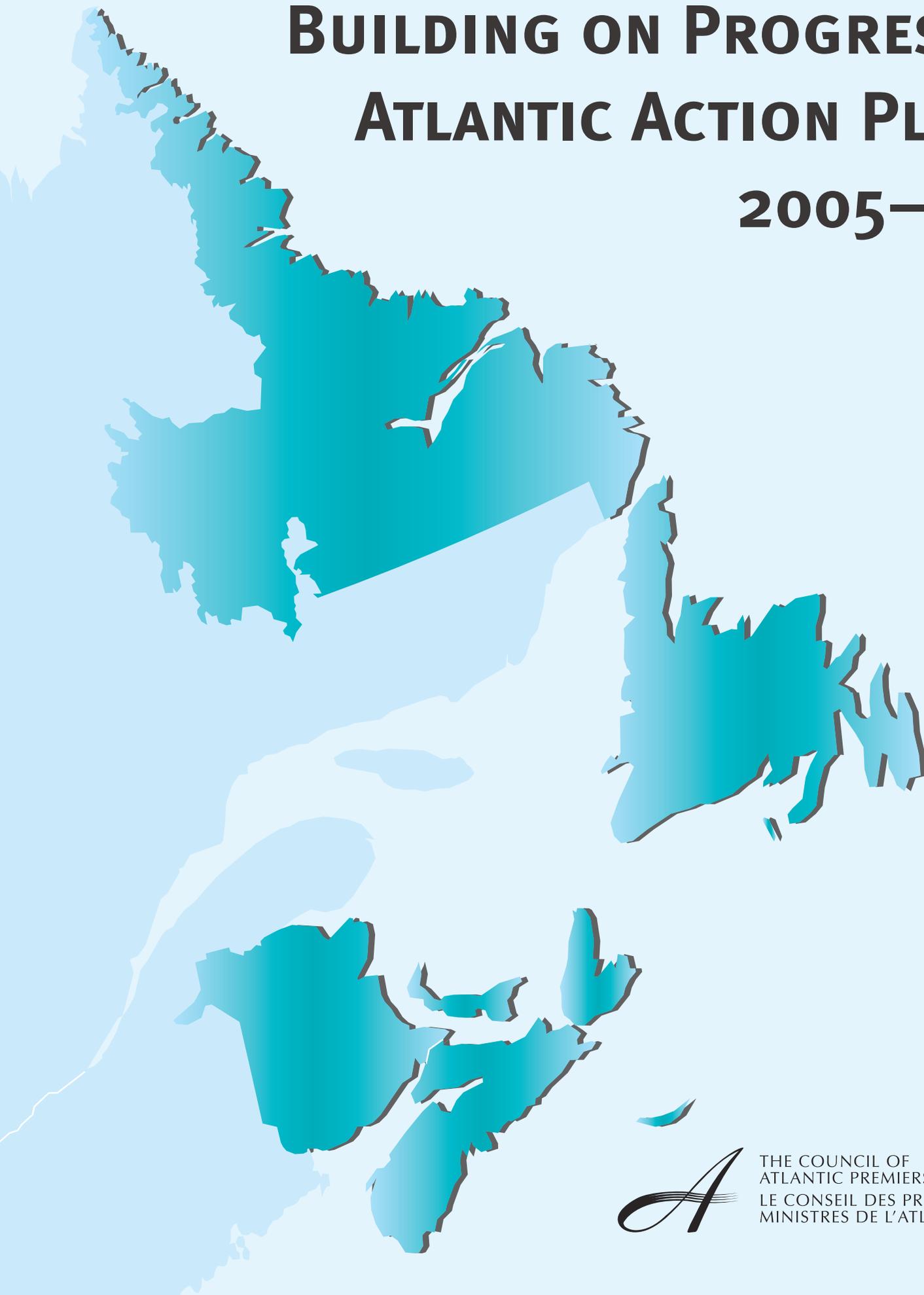


BUILDING ON PROGRESS: ATLANTIC ACTION PLAN 2005-08



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

BUILDING ON PROGRESS: ATLANTIC ACTION PLAN 2005–08



We are very pleased to introduce our second action plan – *Building on Progress: Atlantic Action Plan 2005–08*.

When we launched the first regional action plan in 2001 we made a commitment to the people of Atlantic Canada that we were embarking on a dynamic path to progress that would lead to change.

The establishment of an Atlantic Ministers’ Forum on Energy, the development of a Harmonized Trucking Strategy, as well as success in education, health, environment and economic development are examples of the milestones we reached.

With *Building on Progress*, our initiatives will focus on providing quality and efficient public service as well as growing a competitive regional economy. While we will be building on the initiatives started under the first action plan, we also have added new initiatives to address current challenges. For example, to grow our population we are looking to immigration initiatives that promote the Atlantic provinces. A larger, skilled population will ultimately increase our economic competitiveness.

Our accomplishments over the last four years have helped strengthen the working relationships among Canada’s Atlantic provinces and we are confident that *Building on Progress* will position the region well for the future.



Premier Bernard Lord,
New Brunswick

Premier John Hamm,
Nova Scotia

Premier Pat Binns,
Prince Edward Island

Premier Danny Williams,
Newfoundland and Labrador

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP) is committed to identifying and pursuing opportunities for joint action among provincial governments to benefit the people of Atlantic Canada. This commitment builds on a strong foundation of regional unity and intergovernmental cooperation in Atlantic Canada spanning more than three decades.

To further strengthen regional ties and to achieve even greater benefits from cooperation, the CAP is pleased to present *Building on Progress: Atlantic Action Plan 2005–08*. This plan reaffirms a shared vision for a prosperous Atlantic Canada, and provides leadership on a new agenda of regional initiatives.

Building on Progress succeeds *Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Cooperation 2001–2003*. The first action plan achieved significant progress across a wide range of public policy areas, including health, environment, procurement, education, economic development, transportation, tourism, and energy. For example:

- The overall quality and efficiency of Atlantic Canada’s health care system has been enhanced through measures such as the Atlantic Common Drug Review (ACDR), launched in 2002, which provides the Atlantic provinces with a cost-effective, evidence-based process to develop recommendations regarding the placement of prescription medications on provincial drug formularies. Given the success of ACDR to date, Atlantic departments of health will work towards extending the mandate of the ACDR for another three years.
- Environmental quality is being protected and enhanced through ongoing cooperation in areas such as pesticide education and training, risk-based corrective action, and water and sewage management in the region.
- To facilitate trade within Atlantic Canada, Atlantic ministers responsible for government purchasing have developed and adopted a set of standard terms and conditions governing the submission and evaluation of vendor submissions in response to Atlantic government tender opportunities.
- Significant accomplishments in education and skills development continue to evolve from the work identified in the 2001–2003 action plan. Working through the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) and the Atlantic provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC), the Atlantic ministers of education and post-secondary education have advanced regional cooperation in the areas of literacy materials and teaching resources, joint curriculum development, on-line education, procurement of school buses, labour market information, skills development, and planning and advocacy for university and college infrastructure renewal.

- Team Canada Atlantic (TCA) is continuing to strengthen trade and investment relationships with the United States. Since it was established in 1999, its trade missions have assisted more than 300 Atlantic Canadian entrepreneurs to meet with 2,475 buyers, agents and business owners from across the United States, resulting in more than \$35 million in sales.
- In the energy sector, the Atlantic Ministers' Forum on Energy has made steady progress in streamlining the regulatory environment, particularly as it relates to the offshore resources, and continues to work on growing a competitive local supply and service industry.
- In addition to attracting visitors from other parts of Canada and the United States, the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership (ACTP), founded in 1991, has drawn tourists from England, Europe and Japan to the region through a combination of advertising in key markets and strategic partnerships with the travel industry.
- In the trucking industry, Atlantic premiers' commitment to a seamless Atlantic trade corridor to move passengers and goods safely, efficiently and effectively has resulted in significant progress towards achieving harmonization. The 2001–03 action plan led to the Atlantic Harmonized Trucking Strategy report, which is progressively reducing red tape and business barriers to efficient transportation.

These examples demonstrate some of the impacts of the regional cooperation achieved through the 2001–03 action plan. *Building on Progress* updates and extends these achievements, and identifies new opportunities for regional collaboration which complement strategic provincial interests. This plan takes into consideration significant changes in the international, national and regional landscapes, and incorporates ideas for cooperation received from both within and outside government. The initiatives detailed in this plan support a long-term vision for the region.

2.0 VISION

Building on Progress focuses on what the four governments can do together to improve the quality and efficiency of public services and to support economic growth and development in the region.

These areas of focus embody a shared vision for regional cooperation to build the best future possible for Atlantic Canada.

Vision

Encourage a climate in which Atlantic Canadians can fully participate and compete in the global economy, benefit from similar levels of quality public services as other Canadians, and continue to enjoy the quality of life and environment that is unique to the region.

Actions outlined in this plan are based on the Atlantic provinces' shared commitment to the following goals:

- Cultivate a vibrant, strong, and self-reliant region with an increasingly entrepreneurial, forward-looking and highly motivated culture;
- Ensure continued accessibility and affordability of high-quality public services;
- Increase the competitiveness and diversification of the region's economy;
- Strengthen the region's research and development capacity and improve productivity; and
- Promote a rich and fulfilling quality of life, which attracts and retains dynamic people.

To realize this vision and achieve these goals, the four provinces will pursue joint actions that are based on the mutual interests of governments and key stakeholders for the benefit of Atlantic Canadians.

3.0 CONTEXT FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

By establishing the Council of Atlantic Premiers and by developing and implementing the first action plan, the Atlantic provinces have strengthened their relationships with each other and with stakeholders. This second action plan seeks to build on those positive relationships and respond to the dynamic and evolving nature of the region and its economy.

Although the previous plan was developed only five years ago, a number of significant changes have taken place which influence how the region does business and plans for the future. Internal and external forces of change are profoundly affecting the dynamics and context for cooperation between provinces.

- Atlantic Canada's export industries are being affected by international trade and security trends, including the rapid growth and reach of markets in China and India, cross-border trade disputes on some exports, and most prominently, increasing border security on the movement of goods and people between countries, particularly between Canada and the United States.
- Well-developed transportation and communications networks are increasingly vital to economic and social opportunity and progress.
- National systems for intergovernmental cooperation are evolving rapidly, including the establishment of the Council of the Federation (COF), and the advent of more regular first ministers' meetings to discuss issues of national significance.
- The first action plan has further enhanced awareness and capacity for cooperation within Atlantic Canada, through such initiatives as the Atlantic Advisory Committee on Health Human Resources, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), the Atlantic Energy Ministers' Initiative, and the November 2004 premiers' awareness and promotion initiative in Toronto.

At the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) 2004 Economic Summit, leaders from the private and public sectors ranked their top priorities for action to create a more prosperous Atlantic Canada.

- Reduce interprovincial barriers and improve regional economic cooperation
- Improve perceptions and build positive attitudes within and outside the region
- Invest in education (more funding, better accountability and performance, and greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and mentoring)
- Increase immigration

Recognizing these new dynamics and stakeholder priorities, Atlantic premiers will work together to address a number of key challenges facing the region. The actions outlined in this plan are designed to:

- Narrow the prosperity gap between the Atlantic provinces and the rest of Canada, and become more productive and competitive;
- Address demographic shifts to remain competitive in a global society;
- Secure strategic investments in post-secondary education, skills training and research and innovation;
- Improve fiscal arrangements to address fiscal imbalance in the federation;
- Promote the region's strong business case for investment and a place to live and work;
- Reduce red tape and encourage harmonization between provinces;
- Meet environmental challenges, especially in the energy sector; and
- Renew and develop educational, municipal and transportation infrastructure.

As they work to address these challenges, the Atlantic premiers will also take advantage of the region's opportunities and strengths, many of which have been enhanced by the first action plan.

- Solid gains in output per capita have been achieved across the region, and capital investment has increased by 50% between 1994 and 2003. Strong growth has taken place in energy, telecommunications, manufacturing, and service industries, featuring trends towards higher value-added products and increases in overall efficiency.
- The region is strategically located at the north-eastern tip of the continent, acting as a North American gateway at the intersection of three powerful and shifting trade networks – north-south NAFTA, the EU-NAFTA, and Suez Express (from South and East Asia via the Suez Canal).
- Cross-border infrastructure and transportation infrastructure have improved significantly.
- Trade relationships with the US have been strengthened, and strong potential exists to diversify into new market opportunities, particularly China, India, Brazil, Mexico and other high-growth emerging markets.
- Atlantic Canada has exceptional university and college networks, preparing and training workers for a variety of important sectors.
- The first action plan has extended an already well-established tradition of regional cooperation among the four Atlantic provinces, and has further strengthened their commitment to continue to work together to improve the region's contribution to the federation.

After a strong tradition of the four Atlantic provinces working together over three decades, the case for Atlantic regional cooperation is as strong today as it has ever been.

4.0 MOVING FORWARD

Building on Progress: Atlantic Action Plan 2005–08 underscores a commitment by the Atlantic premiers to fully inform the public about their plans and priorities for further collaboration.

This action plan integrates the views of many regional stakeholders, and encourages a dynamic exchange of views throughout the implementation period. Many organizations, including media, business, government, and policy research institutes, are calling for strong leadership and a unified voice on regional and national issues directly affecting the prosperity of Atlantic Canadians.

Building on Progress responds to the need to press forward and pursue joint action on regional initiatives. The actions highlighted in the following sections have been identified within key sectors of priority to all four Atlantic governments over the period 2005–08. These actions build upon past and existing initiatives, while leaving the door open to new opportunities for regional cooperation that benefit all Atlantic Canadians.

5.0 REGIONAL THEMES

Actions in *Building on Progress* are framed around two broad themes, each tied to intended outcomes and new and evolving actions. These two interlocking themes are:

- Providing quality and efficient public services; and
- Growing a competitive regional economy.

5.1 THEME ONE: PROVIDING QUALITY AND EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICES

Atlantic governments recognize the importance of providing essential services to their citizens and spend a significant portion of their budgets to do so. Regional cooperation maximizes the impact of this investment through more efficient delivery and higher quality services to Atlantic Canadians. By coordinating standards and activities and by sharing knowledge and resources, the Atlantic provinces can achieve further progress in cutting red tape and reducing duplication and overlap in services. These outcomes will maximize our resources to ensure better value and quality, and further enhance the competitiveness of regional economies.

Regional initiatives within this theme are focused on the following outcomes:

- Improved access to essential public services;
- Quality service delivery; and
- Increased efficiencies through harmonization and coordination of standards, best practices and activities.

The Council of Atlantic Premiers has identified several evolving and new initiatives in the areas of health, environment, public safety, government procurement, and social services to further enhance efficient, high-quality services offered in the region.

5.1.1 Health

Atlantic premiers are committed to working collaboratively to ensure that their provincially funded health care systems provide all Atlantic Canadians with access to comparable, high-quality, and financially sustainable services.

Through *Building on Progress*, premiers will take joint action in a number of areas to improve the quality and efficiency of Atlantic Canada's health care system.

- Collaborate with the federal government to improve public health research and knowledge transfer by establishing a "National Collaborating Centre for Social Determinants of Health" in Atlantic Canada.
- Identify priority measures to address the supply of health human resources in the region.
- Build on the successes of Health Infostructure Atlantic (HIA) by moving forward on the key areas identified by Atlantic premiers in 2004, specifically, a common provider registry, a health surveillance system to track diseases, diagnostic imaging, and electronic patient records; and, collaborate on strategies to enhance access to health care services for all Atlantic Canadians through the development of the Self-Care/ Tele-Care initiative.
- Collaborate on the development of strategies to promote wellness and healthy living for Atlantic Canadians.
- Seek support of the Government of Canada to ensure that Atlantic Canadians have access to catastrophic drug coverage.

5.1.2 Environment

Atlantic premiers are committed to taking collective action where possible to better protect and manage the region's environment, while also contributing to the region's economic growth by improving consistency and predictability for industry. The priorities for joint action during 2005–08 are to:

- Formalize existing processes for communications, cooperation and collaboration on regional environmental issues through the formation of a Council of Atlantic Ministers of the Environment;
- Continue to collaborate on pest management education initiatives through the Atlantic Working Group on Pest Management, Education and Training Standards; and
- Explore opportunities to develop cooperative, or complementary, extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs to more effectively address common solid waste resource management issues, while creating more consistency and predictability for industry.

5.1.3 Government Procurement

Atlantic provincial governments continue to collaborate in pursuing cost-effective, innovative procurement policies that benefit Atlantic Canadians.

Building on the strong foundation for regional cooperation in government procurement established under the *Atlantic Procurement Agreement* in 1992, and the further progress achieved through the 2001–03 action plan, premiers mandate the Atlantic Procurement Coordinating Committee to:

- Work towards liberalizing procurement thresholds eliminating trade-distorting preferences to all Atlantic suppliers;
- Implement a reporting mechanism allowing each party to identify the success of its suppliers in each Atlantic province as a result of public access to tenders; and
- Further explore options for joint procurement where it is most practical and in the best interest of Atlantic suppliers and governments.

5.1.4 Social Services

Atlantic deputy ministers responsible for social services have established the Atlantic Deputy Ministers' Forum. The Forum will promote regional cooperation and collaboration, provide a mechanism to share best practices in the social services sector, and allow deputies to explore consensus positions on issues to enable ministers to speak with a regional voice.

The federal government has committed \$5 billion over five years to support the development of early learning and child care across the country based on the principles of Quality, Universally Inclusive, Accessible and Developmental (QUAD). Improving childcare programs and services will require an integrated and comprehensive approach.

In addition, there is a shortage of behaviorally trained professionals in the Atlantic region, while the prevalence and incidence rates for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are reportedly increasing. The prevalence and management of ASD requires an integrated and coordinated service delivery model and team-based approach to intervention planning.

To address these challenges, premiers mandate the Deputy Ministers' Forum to:

- Explore best practices and share information on early learning and child care so that families and children will benefit from higher-quality programs; and
- Explore regional training opportunities for behaviourally trained professionals working with individuals with ASD.

5.1.5 Public Safety

Atlantic premiers are committed to working together to enhance public safety. In the borderless world of crime, action to reduce obstacles to effective and cooperative law enforcement protects our citizens and visitors. Our public safety focus will strengthen Atlantic Canada's trade position and ability to attract and retain businesses and residents.

In Canada, peace officers lose their powers and authorities upon leaving the province in which they are appointed. The Uniform Law Conference of Canada, under the direction of the federal/provincial/territorial Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials and with the support of the deputy ministers of justice, developed model legislation which would allow provincially appointed peace officers to maintain their status when travelling to other Canadian jurisdictions to conduct investigations. Cross-border policing legislation is most effective when passed by neighbouring provinces. Strong endorsement across the Canadian law enforcement community has reinforced passage of Cross-Border Policing Acts in Manitoba and Nova Scotia. Accordingly, the priority for Atlantic premiers is to:

- Mandate Atlantic justice and public safety ministers to work together to explore the introduction of cross-border policing legislation in all four Atlantic provinces.

5.2 THEME TWO: GROWING A COMPETITIVE REGIONAL ECONOMY

The four premiers are committed to promoting the long-term economic competitiveness of the region through joint action to address key competitiveness issues and opportunities influencing the region. To accomplish this, the Atlantic provinces have agreed to work together to strengthen and diversify the regional economy. Premiers will build on the strengths of each province, and work with the federal government on pan-Atlantic and bilateral cost-sharing agreements. The priority areas for joint action include human capital development, immigration, innovation and productivity, economic growth infrastructure, natural resources, tourism and culture, and energy.

Regional initiatives within this theme are focused on the following outcomes:

- Increased GDP per capita in the region;
- Growth in productivity and in R&D activity as share of GDP in the region;
- An improved entrepreneurial and business climate;
- Increased real personal income per capita; and
- A well-educated, diverse, and skilled population.

5.2.1 Human Capital Development

Atlantic education ministers have agreed to pursue a number of strategic priorities to improve student performance and education and training environments. To fulfil the long-term plan for excellence in education and training that are the mainstays of the new Atlantic Canada knowledge economy, ministers will work together to:

- Engage the federal government on funding arrangements for post-secondary infrastructure renewal to meet identified facility and equipment needs of our universities and community colleges;
- Address the needs of industry with regard to both skills quality and labour supply, through retraining, strengthened apprenticeship systems, expanded access to lifelong learning, increased immigration and retention of skilled workers, and improved availability of reliable, accessible and timely labour market information;
- Engage the federal government and other stakeholders in investments in research and development in our universities and community colleges;
- Expand and enhance direct delivery programs to raise adult literacy levels, through such actions as improved classroom and on-line curriculum, learner support services, and service provider training;
- Provide education program support by assisting teachers and administrators in implementing curriculum, and improving literacy and numeracy; and,
- Assist in the improvement of student performance by setting targets for achievement, linking learning research to teaching practices in schools, and developing learning resource materials to assist educators.

5.2.2 Immigration

Immigration is a key contributor to economic growth and creates a diverse population that enhances creativity and innovation. The Atlantic provinces, with 7.6% of Canada's population, are currently attracting only about 1.2% of all the immigrants to Canada.

CAP has identified immigration as one of the keys to improving Atlantic Canada's economic competitiveness. Therefore, the four premiers will mandate their ministers responsible for immigration to work to attract and retain more immigrants through action to:

- Collaborate on joint research projects on immigration issues;
- Share best practices on “welcoming community” strategies in the Atlantic provinces;
- Explore initiatives to jointly promote the Atlantic provinces, including:
 - Developing marketing materials to promote the Atlantic provinces as a desirable destination for potential immigrants;
 - Participating in trade missions to promote immigration;
 - Targeting specific countries and particular skill sets to address identified needs in the Atlantic provinces; and
 - Targeting visa posts for the distribution of promotional material and hold information sessions for front-line staff.

5.2.3 Innovation and Productivity

Regional cooperation can help universities and the broader research community commercialize their innovations, and can foster a business environment conducive to successful start-up and sustainable growth of new companies trying to commercialize new products.

Building on existing initiatives, Atlantic governments will work with partners to:

- Advocate for improved availability of risk capital for entrepreneurs;
- Support development of clusters of expertise and investment focusing on areas of emerging strength;

- Advocate the expanded presence and relocation of national research facilities throughout the region;
- Lobby for an increased share of federal procurement for technical services, equipment and supplies; and,
- Identify strategic opportunities in the knowledge-based economy.

5.2.4 Transportation Infrastructure

Governments have a critical role in building and maintaining strategic infrastructure to improve competitiveness and to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services to markets. Infrastructure needs and demands have changed in today's globally competitive world. The capacity of the Atlantic provinces to finance major increases in transportation investment is limited, and increasingly governments must seek new funding partnerships. Security and environmental concerns have also become significant priorities in the provision of transportation services. Collaboration on transportation policy issues and focused investment in strategic infrastructure, including key trade corridors, are central to making Atlantic Canada more competitive.

Atlantic premiers are committed to strengthening partnerships with the federal government to secure essential federal support to meet critical transportation infrastructure and policy requirements, and will collaborate to:

- Increase economic growth through highway improvement and seamless trade corridors across the region;
- Continue to advance positions and interventions regarding land border, airport and port security measures as well as enhanced border crossings, particularly at key Maine/New Brunswick border points; and,
- Continue to communicate the strategic role of the network of airports and seaports as an important contributor to economic prosperity in the Atlantic provinces and Canada as a whole.

Premiers mandate ministers responsible for transportation and highway safety to continue with the work of the Harmonized Trucking Strategy, including measures to:

- Harmonize the movement of over-dimensional loads and training requirements for escort vehicle drivers;

- Work towards the development of common enforcement practices and training in the Atlantic provinces;
- In conjunction with industry, work towards making shippers responsible for road infractions associated with overweight or load security issues where shippers control the loading operation; and
- Pursue opportunities to conduct joint research that will benefit the trucking industry and facilitate enforcement operations as well as establishing a template for the other Atlantic provinces in the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems related to commercial vehicle operations, based on the New Brunswick plan.

5.2.5 Natural Resources

Atlantic Canada's economy has traditionally relied on a strong resource sector. The region's rich abundance of natural resources and of food products from land and sea has made the Atlantic provinces an important part of Canada's history and development.

CAP is committed to ensuring that the region's resource sector is supported by collaboration on a number of fronts, including sustainable forest management, wildlife, and agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture.

Sustainable Forest Management

To further strengthen the level of cooperation in the region's forestry sector, Atlantic premiers will:

- Continue to support a united position among four Atlantic governments and the Maritime Lumber Bureau (MLB) on softwood lumber to ensure the region is exempt from countervailing duties and anti-dumping rates;
- Work to ensure that the Atlantic provinces receive fair and equitable treatment under the Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy, and are able to benefit from this important federal/provincial/territorial initiative; and
- Direct ministers responsible for forestry to establish an Atlantic Forestry Committee whose mandate will be to identify and investigate areas related to forestry where cooperation is possible within the four Atlantic provinces, and to develop common, coordinated approaches and messages.

Wildlife

Many serious human and agricultural diseases have a wildlife link, and it is likely that this area will become even more important in the future. The premiers recognize the need to:

- Continue to support the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre to ensure that governments are better able to understand the linkages between diseases that affect humans and animals that have a role in these diseases, and to be better prepared to respond to any outbreaks, which may occur.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture

The Atlantic premiers have identified a number of ongoing initiatives where enhanced regional cooperation can benefit the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, including actions to:

- Explore further opportunities for joint marketing and food product promotion;
- Continue to cooperate in negotiations with the federal government on the sustainability of the finfish aquaculture industry in Atlantic Canada;
- Coordinate and communicate approaches to strategic issues facing the Atlantic Canadian agricultural and food industries by, on the one hand, federal and provincial governments and, on the other hand, research and educational centres; and
- Promote the sharing of market intelligence, and of information on R&D findings and other initiatives such as developing a regional life sciences “hub” for information generation and investment.

5.2.6 Tourism and Culture

The tourism industry is a high-growth sector in Atlantic Canada. Atlantic premiers are committed to maximizing the economic growth and job creation of the tourism and culture sector.

The Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership (ACTP) is a pan-Atlantic partnership between governments and industry. The current ACTP agreement with the federal government ends in March 2006. To ensure the ongoing success of regional cooperation in tourism, the four Atlantic provinces will:

- Work with federal and industry partners to renew the ACTP focused on marketing strategies and product development.

5.2.7 Energy

In the 2001–2003 action plan, premiers directed their ministers responsible for energy to establish an Atlantic Energy Ministers’ Forum, and asked the Forum to identify where the four provinces should focus their collective efforts to ensure the continued growth of the energy sector to the benefit of all Atlantic Canadians.

Since then, the Forum has made steady progress in streamlining the regulatory environment, particularly as it relates to the offshore resources, and continues to work on growing a competitive local supply and service industry. The Forum will continue to pursue these initiatives, and will build on progress by exploring opportunities to collaborate in the areas of environmental protection and electricity sector development, including the following activities:

- Jointly develop and implement an energy efficiency awareness campaign which educates Atlantic Canadians about actions individuals can take to decrease energy consumption and thereby reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Explore the establishment of common guiding principles to serve as a framework for Atlantic provinces which have or are developing a provincial Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS);
- Develop and implement a regional electricity sector approach, where possible and appropriate, factoring into this the contribution of energy efficiency, clean and renewable energy technologies, competitive energy pricing, cooperative methods to ensure energy reliability in generation and transmission infrastructures, and methods for competing in electricity export markets;
- Examine the benefits of developing regional air emissions reduction models (such as a cap-and-trade program) applicable to sulphur dioxides and nitrous oxides, which directly impact the electricity sector; and,
- Share best practices in oil and gas regulation.

6.0 TAKING HOLD OF OUR FUTURE

The four premiers recognize that cooperation is essential if the Atlantic provinces are to continue to provide effective public services and grow healthy economies. The Atlantic provinces' collective future depends on attracting investment and on making known the region's strengths and its readiness to fully participate in the global marketplace.

In this regard, Atlantic premiers are committed to promoting Atlantic Canada as a region of diverse provinces that have a secure, bright and progressive future. It is important that people understand Atlantic Canada is a great place to invest, to work and to live.

In November 2004, the four premiers led a communications and promotion initiative in Toronto, where they spoke to key business leaders about the positive attributes and advantages of living, investing, and working in the Atlantic provinces. Through such measures, Atlantic premiers are able to communicate a positive image of the region, promoting its diversity and prosperity, and highlighting the successes of a strong history of regional cooperation. Building on the success of this initiative, CAP will continue to take concerted action to promote the region of the future to key external audiences.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

Building on Progress reflects the Atlantic premiers' ongoing commitment to regional cooperation. The premiers look forward to its implementation over the coming months and years. This action plan builds on past work, and allows for growth in the future. It is flexible, allowing all four governments to identify and explore new ideas and opportunities for regional cooperation.

The items identified in this plan are action-oriented with anticipated completion dates by the end of 2008. Atlantic premiers will report regularly through CAP on these initiatives, indicating progress towards their completion as well as the introduction of new areas of cooperation.

Regional cooperation in the delivery of services and in growing a competitive economy will encourage a climate in which Atlantic Canadians can fully participate and compete in the global economy, benefit from similar levels of public services as other Canadians, and continue to enjoy the quality of life and environment that is unique to Atlantic Canada.