

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 9, 2008

COMMUNIQUÉ

Fredericton, New Brunswick – New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham chaired the 15th meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers today at the Delta Fredericton Hotel. Premiers Danny Williams of Newfoundland and Labrador, Rodney MacDonald of Nova Scotia, and Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island attended the meeting.

Atlantic Collaboration for Citizens

Building on agreements from the Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets held in Sackville, NB in January 2008 and ongoing work of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, progress has been made in a number of key areas.

Health Promotion and Wellness

Premiers are pleased to note that significant progress has been made in identifying opportunities for collaborative initiatives in the areas of healthy food choices, physical activity, and reduction in smoking. Premiers endorsed the following Atlantic initiatives.

- Premiers announced measures to encourage healthy lifestyles in Atlantic Canada. They will cooperate on a health and wellness campaign to be launched by ministers responsible in the fall of 2008.
- Premiers recognized the role workplaces play in promoting and supporting healthy lifestyle choices. They directed ministers to develop a model policy for healthy meetings in their respective jurisdictions. These policies are to include guidelines for ensuring the availability of nutritious food and incorporating healthy practices into government-sponsored meetings and events.
- Premiers directed ministers to develop options for implementing an Atlantic dietician call centre service and foster workplace leadership to support employee tobacco cessation.
- Premiers committed to bring ministers, stakeholders, and a broad range of partners together for a regional forum on wellness, to be hosted by Prince Edward Island in the fall of 2008.

Premiers also discussed the critical importance of assisting Atlantic youth in need. The use of illicit drugs by youth has risen over the past decade with increasing economic and social impacts. Premiers discussed collaborative approaches to youth treatment which may include the use of Portage Atlantic Facility at Cassidy Lake, NB, and other recognized services.

Affordable Housing

Housing is a major determinant of quality of life and is directly linked to individual health and well-being, educational achievement, labour market attachment, and poverty alleviation.

The Atlantic provinces are facing critical challenges in maintaining the existing social housing stock and responding to new demands for social housing, and are united in their desire to engage the federal government in re-establishing a partnership to provide affordable social housing in Canada.

Premiers call upon the federal government to return to federal social housing contribution levels of \$2 billion annually, renew housing programs set to expire in March 2009, and engage with ministers responsible for housing on the broad range of housing issues facing the country.

Maritime Radio Communications System

Recent flooding events in New Brunswick and the observance of Emergency Preparedness Week in Canada have highlighted the need for the Atlantic region to be both economically strong and resilient.

Each of the Maritime provinces operates an independent radio communications system for the coordination of its respective emergency responder communities. The ability of provinces to respond to emergency situations is strengthened by leveraging appropriate technology, infrastructure, and equipment.

Maritime premiers agreed to explore the development of a common public radio communications system to achieve efficiencies and provide seamless interoperability between provinces. Premiers directed ministers to pursue the development of a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize their partnership.

Atlantic Collaboration for Economic Growth

Premiers agreed that the Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets identified a clear path for collaborative work to strengthen the region's economy. Initial efforts by governments are contributing to a competitive, sustainable, resilient, and secure region.

Research and Development

Premier MacDonald will host a symposium to look at the issue of research and development and commercialization. This will be conducted in collaboration with post-secondary institutions and the business community in the region.

Atlantic Gateway

Premiers discussed the importance of the Atlantic Gateway strategy and its benefits to the four Atlantic provinces and Canada.

Premiers noted that several key infrastructure projects are being advanced that will contribute to greater regional interconnection as well as the region's ability to manage increasing international

trade with traditional markets, such as North America and Europe, and emerging markets, such as China and India.

Premiers agreed that the federal government should invest immediately in the Atlantic Gateway to position the region for increased economic growth. Raising awareness of the competitive advantages of Atlantic Canada internationally and within North America is fundamental to the Gateway's future success.

Premiers acknowledged the valuable contribution of the private sector and urged their continued support for development of a competitive, multi-modal transportation system that will link the Atlantic Gateway to key markets.

Given the importance of rail service to the development of the Atlantic Gateway, premiers welcomed the recently announced review by Transport Canada of non-passenger rail service. They committed to actively engage in the review process to ensure that service levels support the economic development of the region.

Climate Change

Premiers noted that their governments continue to collaborate on environmental issues and are working to mitigate and adapt to the harmful effects of human activity on climate. Atlantic provinces are collectively working toward the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers' regional target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emission levels to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020. Provinces are implementing their respective climate change initiatives to achieve reductions and promote adaptation. Premiers specifically noted the importance of energy efficiency and the potential contribution that it will make toward reaching mitigation targets.

Premiers acknowledged the ongoing work of the Atlantic Energy Ministers to promote energy efficiency, reduce energy demand, investigate options for development and use of low carbon fuels, and facilitate the development of low-emission renewable energy, such as tidal, nuclear, and wind.

Premiers also recognized the importance of working with the federal government in developing regulations and agreements that recognize Atlantic Canada's unique circumstances regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation. Premiers encouraged the Council of Atlantic Ministers of the Environment to continue these efforts when they meet with federal Environment Minister Baird in June in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Internal Trade

At the August 2007 Council of the Federation meeting in Moncton, premiers endorsed a five-point plan to strengthen the Agreement on Internal Trade. The plan calls for strengthening the national internal trade agreement in the areas of dispute resolution, labour mobility, energy, agriculture, and transportation.

Atlantic premiers today discussed progress on the Council's five-point plan and urged federal, provincial, and territorial governments to conclude their work in all areas prior to the Council of the Federation's 2008 summer meeting, to be held July 16-18 in Québec City.

Enhanced Driver's Licences

As of June 1, 2009, all Canadians entering the United States by air, land, or sea will need to present an approved document, such as a valid passport, confirming their citizenship and identity. Several states and provinces are evaluating the viability of an enhanced driver's licence (EDL) as a convenient and acceptable border document for land and sea crossing.

Atlantic premiers reviewed an analysis commissioned by Atlantic registrars of motor vehicles that assessed the costs, technical requirements, and benefits of producing EDLs for Atlantic Canadians. This information was considered in conjunction with the results of discussions with the Canadian Border Service Agency.

Premiers directed the Atlantic registrars of motor vehicles to consider options for regional cooperation to gain shared benefits and cost efficiencies.

Agriculture

Premiers discussed the importance of agriculture in their provinces and the increased pressures that the industry is facing in the region. They directed ministers responsible for agriculture to develop a framework agreement, focusing on collaborative initiatives to promote the development of the agriculture sector in Atlantic Canada. They also noted opportunities for Atlantic Canada food industry to supply the federal government's international food aid activities.

Promoting Atlantic Canada

Premiers agreed to continue efforts to promote Atlantic Canada's trade, investment, and partnership opportunities. To achieve these objectives, premiers announced an upcoming mission to Calgary in October.

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For further information, please contact:

Nicole Picot, New Brunswick (506) 453-6449

Elizabeth Matthews, Newfoundland and Labrador (709) 729-3960

Wade Keller, Nova Scotia (902) 424-6600

Erin Mitchell, Prince Edward Island (902) 368-4400