



ATLANTIC CABINETS TO COLLABORATE IN KEY AREAS

SACKVILLE, NEW BRUNSWICK, January 18, 2008 – Premiers and ministers from the four Atlantic provinces met today at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.

“I would like to thank my colleagues for agreeing to come together today for this important meeting,” said Premier of New Brunswick, Shawn Graham who chaired the session. “I believe we can significantly accelerate economic growth in the Atlantic region by working together where it makes sense. Our investment in time and energy to ensure continued strategic collaboration between our four provinces will pay dividends for Atlantic Canadians.”

The meeting included presentations and discussions on a number of topics under four themes – demographics and educational attainment, wellness and healthy living, energy and the environment, and innovation and economic progress. Regional agreements were also concluded in six key areas – energy, health and wellness, literacy, aquaculture, procurement and transportation.

Energy

Through the Council of Atlantic Premiers, premiers directed their ministers responsible for energy to gather ideas for collaborative energy projects. Today, the ministers presented and signed the *Atlantic Energy Framework for Collaboration*. Among the objectives of the Framework is the desire for provinces to strive to provide a climate in which Atlantic Canadians enjoy the environmental, social and economic benefits of energy efficiency, regional generation of electricity and renewable energy development.

“It is important to collaborate among provinces within our region, and to strategize in priority areas of common interest,” said Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams. “In particular, I was pleased that our province led the discussion on energy and the environment, areas that have a significant economic impact in our region and indeed the country. We must ensure that we are positioned to take advantage of the opportunities and tackle the challenges associated with energy development and environmental issues. Our discussions today were productive and advanced work in these areas.”

Health and Wellness

“I am very pleased to see the Atlantic governments working together in the areas of health promotion and wellness,” said Premier of Prince Edward Island, Robert Ghiz. “As we go forward, we must continue to build upon existing strategies and actions, while seeking new areas of collaboration. I believe it’s important that we work together to share knowledge and ideas while leveraging our resources to improve the health and wellness of Atlantic Canadians.”

Under the theme of wellness and healthy living, premiers and ministers recognized the important role of healthy lifestyles in healthy child and youth development, healthy aging and reducing the risk of chronic disease. The *Resolution Concerning Atlantic Collaboration on the Promotion of Health and Wellness*, signed by the premiers, speaks to the potential of combining efforts and enhancing current initiatives to promote healthy food choices, physical activity and reduction in smoking.

Literacy

Premier of Nova Scotia, Rodney MacDonald, led discussions under the theme of Demographics and Educational Attainment.

“We all share the challenges of an ageing population, worker out-migration, and a shrinking tax base,” said Premier MacDonald. “Each of our governments has agreed to cooperate in the development of common curriculum, and related resources for assessment and accreditation where possible. We have also committed to moving forward with our recruitment, retention and competitive market strategies to help address these growing concerns.”

Literacy was raised under this theme. Premiers and ministers agreed that strategic action to promote and improve literacy within the region was essential. Premiers signed the *Resolution Concerning Literacy*, which among other things, endorses the efforts of the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training to host an Atlantic-wide forum on literacy in April 2008 in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Aquaculture

Premiers and ministers also discussed their common interest in fostering the development of the aquaculture industry for mutual benefit. The ministers responsible for aquaculture signed the *Atlantic Provinces’ Memorandum of Understanding for the Development of the Aquaculture Sector*. The MOU outlines potential areas of cooperation including unifying the region’s voice on aquaculture when working with the federal government.

Procurement

Premiers signed a revised *Atlantic Procurement Agreement*, which augments and extends the positive elements of the agreement signed in 1992, then the first-of-its-kind agreement in Canada. The Agreement enables greater access to provincial governments’ purchasing of goods, services and construction by lowering interprovincial trade barriers and removing all forms of discrimination between the four Atlantic provinces.

Transportation

Atlantic ministers of transportation released *Charting the Course: Atlantic Canada Transportation Strategy 2008-2018*, which presents a 10-year vision for a state-of-the-art multimodal transportation system in Atlantic Canada that will support the region's economic and social development with benefits for all of Canada.

Next Meeting

Premiers and ministers concluded the meeting by committing to meet again. The next meeting will take place in Prince Edward Island.

Brief summaries of the signed documents are attached.

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BACKGROUNDERS

of agreements announced at the Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets

Atlantic Energy Framework for Collaboration

At the December 2006 meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP), premiers directed ministers responsible for energy to develop an Atlantic Energy Framework and to gather ideas for collaborative energy projects among the four Atlantic jurisdictions. Under the new framework agreement, the Atlantic ministers responsible for energy agreed to increase cooperation among their respective governments, and strive to provide an energy climate in which Atlantic Canadians enjoy environmental, social and economic benefits. Initial collaborative projects under the Atlantic Energy Framework for Collaboration would focus on enhancing regional energy efficiency programming, assessing biofuel potential, and increasing renewable energy development.

Resolution Concerning Literacy

The resolution calls on the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) to develop an action plan to improve literacy in Atlantic Canada. The action plan will complement existing and planned initiatives undertaken by the federal and provincial governments, community groups, the private sector, and organized labour.

The most recent statistics indicate that a significant number of adults in Atlantic Canada are not functionally literate. Atlantic Canadian students in the school system also perform under the Canadian average in three domains – reading, mathematics and science.

The Atlantic ministers of education and training are hosting an Atlantic-wide literacy forum on April 14-15, 2008 in Saint John, NB as part of a pan-Canadian event of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). The results of the forum will provide valuable information to departments of education to develop strategies to improve literacy within the Atlantic region.

Resolution Concerning Atlantic Collaboration on the Promotion of Health and Wellness

The *Resolution Concerning Atlantic Collaboration on the Promotion of Health and Wellness* calls on the ministers responsible to develop a framework for collaborative action in Atlantic Canada. The framework will complement existing and planned initiatives undertaken by the federal and provincial governments, community groups, the private sector, and other non-government organizations.

Possible areas for collaboration include developing healthy public policy, promoting healthy lifestyles, and surveillance of common risk factors for chronic disease with a focus on healthy food choices, physical activity, and a reduction in smoking.

Atlantic Provinces' Memorandum of Understanding for the Development of the Aquaculture Sector

As a relatively new industry that has emerged over the last 30 years, aquaculture is recognized as offering significant opportunity for rural coastal communities throughout Atlantic Canada. The industry today provides employment for over 5,000 Atlantic Canadians and generates annual sales in excess of \$400 M from the region.

In recognition of the mutual interest by the four Atlantic provinces to collaborate and foster growth of the aquaculture sector, the *Atlantic Provinces' Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Development of the Aquaculture Sector* has been signed. The agreement provides a formalized mechanism to collaborate on common goals in fostering an economically viable and environmentally sustainable industry for coastal communities throughout the region, as well as unifying the region's voice on aquaculture when dealing with the federal government. The MOU also provides a vehicle for harmonization of regulation and policies across the region. Areas of collaboration that have been identified include research and development initiatives, fish health management and surveillance, aquatic invasive species, investment attraction, regional marketing and promotion, as well as training and education.

The MOU also includes provisions for other provinces or territories to become a party to the agreement. With an extensive coastline, established industry, and close proximity to major markets, aquaculture is recognized as a resource sector that can play an important role in the socio-economic fabric of our coastal communities.

Atlantic Procurement Agreement

Premiers entered into a new *Atlantic Procurement Agreement (APA)*, updating and improving upon an earlier regional trade agreement first established in 1992. The Agreement enables greater access to provincial governments' purchasing of goods, services and construction by lowering interprovincial trade barriers and removing all forms of discrimination between the four Atlantic provinces. This Agreement promotes both the general confidence in public sector procurement, as well as the capacities of Atlantic small- and medium-sized businesses by making it easier for local businesses to sell to government. Healthy competition for small- and medium-sized enterprises is expected to result from this new agreement, which ultimately promotes productivity, quality development and the standardization of procurement processes within the Atlantic region.

This revised APA lowers the overall tendering thresholds for provincial government purchasing in Atlantic Canada by \$15,000 for goods, bringing it to \$10,000 from \$25,000. The current thresholds of \$50,000 for services and \$100,000 for construction, in effect for 16 years, will remain the same for provincial governments. The Agreement also makes available to Atlantic provinces, a reciprocity protocol that ensures Atlantic suppliers are given fair and equitable access to all Canadian public sector procurement opportunities.

In conjunction with the signing of the Agreement, the provinces will begin consultations with their municipalities to bring them under the Agreement by June 2009. They will join the academic institutions, school boards and health authorities in all four provinces, which currently fall under the Agreement, with purchasing thresholds at \$25,000 for goods, \$50,000 for services, and \$100,000 for construction.

Charting the Course – Atlantic Canada Transportation Strategy 2008-2018

The Atlantic Canada Transportation Strategy presents a 10-year vision for a state-of-the-art transportation system in Atlantic Canada that will support the region's economic and social development with benefits for all of Canada. The strategy is located at www.gnb.ca/0113/publications/AtlCaTranStrat08-18-e.pdf.

The strategy considers highway, rail, air and marine transportation and builds on the Council of the Federation's national multimodal transportation strategy paper – *Looking to the Future: A Plan for Investing in Canada's Transportation System*. The Strategy recognizes current funding efforts by the federal and provincial governments and calls for all levels of government and the private sector to continue to invest in new transportation infrastructure through new partnerships. The Atlantic Gateway is noted as one such new partnership mechanism that could assist in further reducing the transportation infrastructure deficit. The strategy calls for infrastructure investment, policy and regulatory changes, and service enhancements.