

Council of Atlantic Premiers' meeting communiqué

Atlantic Premiers United on Growing the Economy, Creating Jobs, Oceans Opportunities and Regulatory Cooperation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Halifax, NS (December 11, 2017) – Atlantic Premiers are working together to grow the economy, create jobs, enhance oceans opportunities and modernize and harmonize regulations at the 32nd meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers in Halifax today.

Premier Stephen McNeil of Nova Scotia welcomed Premier Dwight Ball of Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Wade MacLauchlan of Prince Edward Island, and Premier Brian Gallant of New Brunswick to the meeting.

Premiers discussed ways to collaborate in developing the region's workforce, legalizing and regulating cannabis, and improving the climate for business growth by reducing red tape. Premiers also expressed their collective support for ocean related opportunities.

Our Ocean Economy

Premiers expressed their support for a coordinated approach to maximizing the region's economic potential, including in key ocean industries.

The Atlantic provinces' governments have long recognized the value of investing in areas that maximize the region's competitive advantage. The provinces have made investments in infrastructure and assets that support ocean industries. The ocean economy is an exciting and expanding area that has become more knowledge-based and technology intensive and will be a major driver of economic growth in the region. It has its roots in traditional industries such as fisheries, boatbuilding and defence, and includes many diverse high-tech initiatives that attract global researchers and entrepreneurial talent to our region and provide opportunities for youth.

Premiers welcomed the shortlisting of a regional funding proposal for an Oceans Supercluster through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's national Innovation Superclusters Initiative. Funding under this initiative has the potential for significant, positive impact for the region – today and into the future – and is recognition of the strength of the ocean sector in Atlantic Canada.

The Atlantic region has well-established clusters of concentrated yet diverse businesses, research facilities, and post-secondary institutions. Strengthening these clusters would build on Canada's already considerable advantages in the oceans innovation sector.

By aligning the region's highly valuable assets and expertise in key ocean industries, Premiers noted that Atlantic Canada can contribute to the national effort in positioning Canada as a world leader in innovation within the global ocean industries.

Environmental Assessment

Premiers seek to ensure that any changes to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* provide appropriate protection for the environment without resulting in unnecessary delays in approving projects and developments.

It is important that any federal amendments proposed recognize the important role of the provinces and territories in environmental assessment, including joint management processes.

Red Tape Reduction

Modernizing Atlantic Canada's regulatory frameworks and reducing red tape have been key priorities for Atlantic Premiers. Regulatory alignment can enable advancement in the conditions for economic growth and prosperity across Atlantic Canada. Aligning government regulations reduces the administrative burden and regulatory barriers to growth experienced by small- and medium-sized enterprises, and makes it easier for businesses to expand throughout the region.

Improved regional regulatory efficiencies to date include standardizing requirements for trucking companies to improve the movement of goods throughout the region, mutual recognition for temporary licenses for insurance adjusters, and the mutual recognition of safety equipment for head and foot protection. These and other changes are having a positive impact in the region, validating the Premiers' vision for improving regulatory efficiency in Atlantic Canada.

Premiers today reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate on regulatory modernization and harmonization to eliminate or minimize regulatory barriers that negatively impact competitiveness, productivity, labour mobility and interprovincial trade. In this spirit, Atlantic Premiers agree to work toward providing more efficient and cost effective services, reduce duplication, enhance mobility and strengthen technical safety trades through the creation of an *Atlantic Technical Safety Act*.

Premiers agreed today to explore opportunities to align minimum wage rates in the region, with a goal of assisting workers and employers by providing predictability and consistency throughout Atlantic Canada.

Atlantic Workforce Partnership

Premiers are working together to improve the competitiveness of the region's economy through actions to strengthen our workforce. Premiers are extending the successful Atlantic Workforce Partnership for a further three years to continue harmonizing apprenticeship certification in 16 trades, strengthening recruitment of immigrants to the region, and deliver supply chain training pilot programs in all four provinces.

The Atlantic Workforce Partnership was established by the Council of Atlantic Premiers in 2012 to help the region and its workers realize significant economic opportunities on the horizon. A skilled and stable workforce is necessary to maximize economic opportunities.

Atlantic Growth Strategy

Premiers agree on the importance of federal-provincial collaboration to promote the interests of Atlantic Canadians. Premiers discussed their ongoing collaboration with the Government of Canada through the Atlantic Growth Strategy, which has resulted in positive and concrete actions in a number of priority areas, including trade promotion, immigration, and tourism. Premiers are committed to maintaining this momentum.

The success of the Strategy is predicated on meeting the unique needs of Atlantic Canada and federal funding criteria must be sufficiently flexible to support the growth of the economy and strengthen the region's workforce.

Premiers look forward to meeting with the Ministers at the next Leadership Committee meeting, and to continuing to pursue joint initiatives that bring new opportunities for growth to the region.

Legalization and Regulation of Cannabis

Premiers noted that they are working within their jurisdictions and regionally in preparation for the federal legalization of recreational cannabis, with full consideration for public health and safety. Atlantic Premiers committed to pursue a common minimum age of 19 for the legal possession and use of cannabis. Premiers agreed that Health Canada needs to expedite the licensing of suppliers.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers will be hosted by Prince Edward Island in the Spring of 2018.

– 30 –

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