

Premiers Discuss Healthcare and Sustainable Regional Growth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Halifax, NS (December 19, 2022) – Atlantic Premiers met virtually to continue their discussion on health care priorities and sustainable regional growth.

As Chair of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, Premier Tim Houston of Nova Scotia welcomed Premier Blaine Higgs of New Brunswick, Premier Dennis King of Prince Edward Island and Premier Andrew Furey of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Premiers discussed the ongoing need for meaningful dialogue with the federal government about long-term, sustainable health care funding that will greatly assist provinces in providing quality and timely health care to all Atlantic Canadians. The Atlantic provinces are making significant investments to innovate and improve health services and a strong federal funding partnership would support and accelerate those efforts. Premiers continue to call for an increase in the Canada Health Transfer so that the federal share of provincial and territorial health care costs rises to 35%. Premiers echoed the call from the Council of the Federation, Canada's Premiers, to Prime Minister Trudeau for a First Ministers Meeting focused on the Canada Health Transfer.

Health care systems are struggling across the country to meet the evolving needs of Canadians, provide timely services, address workforce shortages and support health care professionals in their workplaces. Through the Atlantic Health Accord and in collaboration with the four Atlantic Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, Premiers are working towards an Atlantic system to allow physicians to move and practice throughout the region.

Widespread labour shortages are an issue facing all our communities and economies. Premiers welcomed federal announcements to increase immigration targets. Atlantic Canada is a prime destination of international and interprovincial migration. Premiers are seeking increased flexibility in immigration programming and for the federal government to improve processing times.

Premiers discussed the steps their provinces are taking to help Atlantic Canadians with the challenges they face due to the rising cost of living. They agreed that ensuring assistance gets to those most in need remains a priority for their governments. The effects of federal carbon pricing on consumers in Atlantic Canada remains a concern given the reliance on home heating oil in the region.

Premiers discussed the importance of internal trade in advancing regional priorities. They committed to doing more to reduce internal trade barriers in key sectors.

Premiers noted that Atlantic Canada is home to Canada's growing clean economy, and discussed clean generation options for the region including hydro, wind, small modular reactors and hydrogen. They agreed that they want the region to benefit from the opportunity that clean energy can deliver for jobs and environmental sustainability and will continue to make investments and modernize regulations to encourage development.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was noted that Premier King of Prince Edward Island will assume the Chair of the Council of the Atlantic Premiers in 2023. Premiers extended their appreciation to outgoing Chair, Premier Houston, for his leadership and service throughout 2022.

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