

## Premiers Discuss Health, Immigration, Labour and Housing Priorities

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI** (February 20, 2023) – Atlantic Premiers met today to discuss important regional and national issues, chart a course for regional collaboration in 2023, and celebrate the opening of the Canada Winter Games.

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

Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister presented his government's proposal for increasing health care funding to provinces and territories, which Canada's Premiers have agreed to accept. While the proposal does not address the long-term sustainability challenge facing health care in Canada, Premiers noted the benefits of bilateral agreements that provide flexibility and recognize the unique demographic and geographical challenges facing the Atlantic region in delivering health care services. The bilateral funding will assist provinces in accelerating progress on their priorities such as access to primary care, reducing surgery backlogs, recruiting and retaining health care workers, and improving mental health and addictions care.

Atlantic Premiers also discussed opportunities to continue regional health collaboration, including sharing best practices and lessons learned as new programs are implemented and scopes of practice for health care professionals are expanded, as well as sharing the innovative approaches their provinces are pursuing to improve health care delivery for their residents.

Through the Atlantic Health Accord, Premiers are working closely with the Registrars of the Atlantic colleges of physicians and surgeons to improve physician mobility within the region as a first step toward broader health care workforce mobility improvement and multi-jurisdictional licensing. Premiers anticipate the Atlantic Physician Register will be in place by May 1, 2023.

Labour shortages are being felt nation-wide by communities and economies. Immigration and the retention of international students who come to Atlantic Canada to further their education are critical to the continued growth of the region. Atlantic Canada is a prime destination for those looking to move to or within Canada and has proven itself to be an ideal location to pilot new immigration programs. Provincial-federal cooperation will be key to finding solutions to the labour challenges facing Canadian industries.

Premiers look forward to meeting with the federal minister of immigration to discuss streamlining processing by reducing duplication, expanding the New Brunswick Critical Worker Pilot to the rest of the region, and adding temporary and permanent resident streams and pathways for health care professionals, targeted projects, and seasonal industries.

Given the importance of enhancing training programs in meeting the demand for new skilled workers across the region, Premiers called on the federal government to renew Labour Market Training Agreements to enable provinces to continue improving job training opportunities for Atlantic Canadians.

Premiers discussed access to affordable housing for Atlantic Canadians and how to support those experiencing homelessness. They agreed to improve access to affordable housing and reduce homelessness in the region.

Regional air travel is a critical transportation link for Atlantic Canadian residents, families and business. Premiers discussed the need for access to reliable and affordable regional air routes and support efforts to re-establish and increase the routes that help connect the region, while also improving access to the rest of Canada and the global economy.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Premiers noted the recent Bell 911 system outage. Premiers agreed to raise this critical public safety infrastructure outage issue, including telecommunications reliability and preparedness, with the federal government.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Adam Ross, Office of the Premier, Prince Edward Island, 902-368-4400

Catherine Klimek, Office of the Premier, Nova Scotia, 902-717-1020

Tyler Campbell, Executive Council, New Brunswick, 506-470-2549

Meghan McCabe, Office of the Premier, Newfoundland and Labrador, 709-729-3960