

Atlantic Premiers Work Together to Improve Health Care and Strengthen the Atlantic Economy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MILL RIVER, PEI (June 12, 2023) – Atlantic Premiers are working to improve health care, address labour shortages and strengthen the region's economy through collaboration and focusing on what can be accomplished by working together to meet the needs of Atlantic Canada.

As 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.

Premiers reiterated their commitment to support Nova Scotians as they continue to address the impacts of devastating wildfires.

Recognizing the importance of mitigating the impacts of climate change, the Atlantic Provinces have taken considerable action to advance the green transition. Premiers call on the federal government to clarify the economic impacts of the Clean Fuel Regulations, taking into account the unique characteristics of the region, including supply constraints and the regulatory environment.

Federal measures taking effect on July 1, 2023, will significantly increase prices for gasoline and diesel and create additional inflationary pressures on families, and more vulnerable people. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has found that these federal policies disproportionately impact Atlantic Canadians. Premiers urge the federal government to re-examine its policies to ensure that Atlantic Canadians do not bear a heavier cost burden than other Canadians.

Premiers discussed the region's long-term electricity needs and the need for firm, reliable power for the region's growing energy needs. Premiers reiterated their commitment to protecting ratepayers to the greatest extent possible while managing the energy transition.

Atlantic Canada is well positioned to be an energy powerhouse in the years ahead with new energy resources and export opportunities being developed. An effective provincial-federal partnership focused on economic growth and affordable energy costs is required.

Through increased collaboration under the Atlantic Health Accord, Premiers remain dedicated to improving health care. Since coming into effect on May 1, 87 physicians have opted into the Atlantic Physician Registry, enabling them to work seamlessly throughout the region. The Registry marks the first multi-jurisdiction licencing model in Canada.

Premiers are committed to building on this success, and have agreed to explore, together with health partners, expanding the Atlantic Registry concept to cover more health professions, reducing administrative burden, improving information and data sharing, and establishing an Atlantic Working Group on International Recruitment. Through these actions, Premiers aim to continue building innovative health systems and improving care for Atlantic Canadians.

Premiers look forward to further discussions on health innovation and human resources when they join their colleagues at the Council of the Federation meeting in Winnipeg next month.

Atlantic Premiers met virtually with the Honourable Sean Fraser, federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to discuss immigration and labour force challenges. Premiers noted that expediting the processing of immigrants for key sectors is important and noted the steps already taken by Minister Fraser to address the issue. The Premiers and Minister Fraser committed to ongoing discussions, and they look forward to meeting again next month at the Atlantic Growth Strategy meeting in New Brunswick. Atlantic Premiers were pleased with Minister Fraser's support for continued improvements to the various immigration streams, including a commitment to be flexible, and the willingness he expressed to continue to work with Atlantic Premiers.

Atlantic Premiers also met virtually with the Premiers of Canada's northern territories: Premier Caroline Cochrane, Northwest Territories; Premier Ranj Pillai, Yukon; and Premier P.J. Akeagok, Nunavut. They discussed shared priorities and ways to address common challenges, including health care human resources and the unique funding needs of small jurisdictions. Premiers from Atlantic Canada and the North agreed to explore further opportunities for collaboration.

Premiers agree on the need for a new federal infrastructure program to address the impacts of climate change and build infrastructure that supports economic growth. Federal programs must provide adequate and predictable funding while also being flexible enough to allow Provinces to use the funding in accordance with their unique infrastructure priorities.

The Chignecto Isthmus between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is a vital corridor at risk due to rising sea levels. Premiers reiterated that the federal government has a constitutional responsibility to maintain links between provinces and fully fund this project.

Premiers reinforced their commitment to improving access to affordable housing and reducing homelessness. They encouraged the federal government to accelerate program delivery and increase flexible funding for existing provincial programming to meet the region's unique needs.

Premiers also urged the federal government to renew Labour Market Transfer Agreements as an important tool supporting workers and employers with training and retraining opportunities that are key to expanding jobs and growth in Atlantic Canada.

Atlantic Canada is acting to reduce barriers to trade and labour mobility within the Atlantic region. Premiers have agreed to work toward an Agreement to Improve Technical Safety, Interjurisdictional Commerce, and the Mobility of Certified Tradespeople in Atlantic Canada. This Agreement would commit to working towards enabling regulated technical tradespeople to work throughout the region as efficiently and effectively as possible.



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