



Council of the Federation Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

OTTAWA, December 7, 2004 – The Council of the Federation marks its first anniversary this week. Over the past 12 months, Premiers have worked hard to build a more constructive and cooperative federal system that better serves the needs of Canadians.

Working together, Premiers have been able to focus their efforts on projects where there is a common purpose and to take actions that benefit all Canadians. In recent months, Premiers have tackled issues that matter to Canadians, such as health care, the economy, trade, Canada-U.S. relations, environmental assessment and literacy.

“As a new institution in Canada, the Council has had noticeable success in its first year. We’ve significantly increased dialogue and collaboration within the federation, and we’ve made real progress on health care, the number one priority of Canadians. We have also taken great strides on important economic issues such as internal trade,” said Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, Chair of the Council of the Federation.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to make progress on its workplan including on the issue of fiscal imbalance. Premiers will also continue to exercise leadership on other issues of importance to Canadians. “Ultimately, all our efforts are aimed at improving the services Canadians receive from their governments,” said McGuinty.

The Council of the Federation is a new institution comprised of all 13 provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively to strengthen the Canadian federation by fostering a constructive relationship among the provinces and territories, and with the federal government.

See also: Media Backgrounder outlining the Council’s key accomplishments in its first year.

To learn more, visit www.councilofthefederation.ca.

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For more information:

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THE COUNCIL
OF THE FEDERATION

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Council of the Federation: Key Accomplishments in Year One

Health Care

- In September 2004, negotiated with the Prime Minister a \$41 billion, ten year plan to strengthen health care to benefit all Canadians.
- In May 2004, led a meeting of Health and Finance Ministers to share best practices in health reform and sustainability, and continue strategic investments to renew and improve health care systems.
- Secured \$2 billion in additional federal funding for health care in January 2004.
- Met with aboriginal leaders to discuss health care priorities in their communities, and provided leadership to ensure aboriginal health issues are addressed.

Economic and fiscal issues

- Developed and began implementation on a comprehensive workplan to continue to make progress towards reducing barriers to trade among provinces and territories.
- Secured enhancements to equalization payments for 2004-05.
- Undertook and released a Conference Board of Canada study confirming the existence of fiscal imbalance in Canada.
- Developed an Action Plan for a National Diamond Strategy.
- Made progress toward streamlining environmental assessment processes.

Reaching out to Canadians

- Created a literacy award to recognize excellence among learners, educators, volunteers, businesses and other organizations involved in literacy.
- Undertook a project to encourage youth engagement in public affairs, including a youth forum at the COF meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- Developed a framework for interprovincial/territorial emergency management mutual aid.
- Recognized the unique challenges of the North and supported territories in their dealings with the federal government.

Premiers first agreed to the concept of a Council in July 2003, and signed the founding agreement on December 5, 2003 in Charlottetown. Premiers created the Council as a way for provinces and territories to play a leadership role in revitalizing the Canadian federation and building a more constructive and cooperative federal system.

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The objective of the Council is to address issues of importance to Canadians by:

- Strengthening interprovincial-territorial cooperation, forging closer ties among the members and contributing to the evolution of the Canadian federation;
- Exercising leadership on issues of importance to Canadians and improving federal-provincial-territorial relations; and
- Promoting relations between governments that are based on respect for the Constitution and recognition of the diversity within the federation.

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