



PROGRESS REPORT

RELEASED FOLLOWING COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION MEETING, JULY 28-30, 2004

PREMIERS ANNOUNCE PROGRESS ON KEY INITIATIVES

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, July 30, 2004 – At the conclusion of the summer meeting of the Council of the Federation, Premiers announced progress on a number of issues.

On the Economy...

Improving Canada-U.S. Relations

Improving the Canada-U.S. relationship remains a fundamental international priority for all Premiers. Premiers are committed to working closely with the federal government in the design and delivery of a revitalized federal/provincial/territorial agenda for Canada-U.S. relations. Premiers will continue to pursue the development of a new working relationship between the Council of the Federation and the National Governors Association in the United States.

Domestic Trade Flows

Premiers Doer and Lord reported on the significant progress being made by provinces and territories in implementing the Council of the Federation's Workplan on Internal Trade. All immediate and short-term actions identified in the Workplan have been implemented. Improvements have also been made to the dispute settlement and decision-making process for the Agreement on Internal Trade. Given that domestic trade accounts for \$232 billion in economic activity a year, next steps are for provinces and territories to:

- continue to honour all obligations under the current Agreement on Internal Trade, including appointing panelists to dispute settlement panels;
- invite the federal government to engage in the Internal Trade process to support the further implementation of the Workplan; and
- continue to work aggressively to implement the Workplan and report to the Council on future progress on the longer term action items.

On behalf of the Council of the Federation, Premiers Lord and Doer will release a comprehensive progress report in the near future.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)

Premiers called upon the federal government to work with provinces and industry to develop a sound, strategic BSE recovery plan to address issues around slaughter capacity, excessive supply, market anomalies and farm income pressures associated with extended border closures. Such a plan must be national in scope, affordable and based on a clear vision for the future of the Canadian cattle and beef industry. Premiers also urged the Prime Minister to personally intervene at the highest levels of the United States Administration to urge the reopening of U.S borders to live cattle.

National Diamond Strategy

Premiers Handley and Charest reported on an Action Plan for a National Diamond Strategy to maximize the benefits and opportunities of the Canadian diamond industry. Premiers received the plan and approved the strategy which makes recommendations in three areas: the supply of Canadian rough diamonds, the demand for diamonds processed in Canada, and the regulation of the market. Key among the recommendations is the establishment of a multi-stakeholder body that will allow all stakeholders to participate in this important national initiative. Cooperation among stakeholders, industry and provincial/territorial governments is important for coordinating efforts and sharing knowledge and expertise. Provincial and Territorial Mines Ministers will continue the development and implementation of the National Diamond Strategy.

Green Economy

Premiers recognize the critical importance of long-term sustainable development to the current and future health and well-being of Canadians and have agreed to work collaboratively in support of more effective integration of common objectives related to economic development, environmental protection and social/economic inclusiveness. In this regard, Premiers have agreed that interested jurisdictions will host two or three conferences on best practices, with the view to identifying promising areas for collaboration related to policy matters such as energy conservation, and green economic development including green technologies.

Environmental Assessment

Premiers approved a plan aimed at improving the timeliness, certainty and predictability of environmental assessments for projects subject to both provincial/territorial and federal assessments. The plan identifies opportunities for providing better service to Canadians, including improved coordination of policy advice, early determination of the need for environmental assessment, reduced duplication of information needed for cooperative reviews, minimization

of conflicting or redundant specialist advice in cooperative reviews, and the development of guidelines to assist the federal government in improving the timeliness, consistency and predictability of comprehensive reviews. Premiers asked for a status report at the next Council of the Federation meeting.

Literacy

Premiers received from their Education and Labour Market Ministers a report entitled *Council of the Federation: Government Initiatives Promoting Literacy Best Practices* dealing with provincial and territorial best practices in literacy. The report will be used by Ministers in each jurisdiction to improve literacy practices and approaches, and has been posted on the Council of the Federation website. Premiers also received a recommendation from Ministers on the implementation of a Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Premiers agreed to create a Council of the Federation medallion that will recognize excellence of learners, educators, volunteers, businesses and other organizations in each province and territory.

On Strengthening the Federation...

Appointments to National Institutions

Premiers discussed the current appointment process to the Senate and Supreme Court of Canada. Premiers agreed that the federal nature of Canada is not adequately reflected and accommodated under the current processes and that it is inappropriate for members of these important national institutions to be chosen unilaterally by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Premiers agree that the ad hoc committee of ministers will continue their work on appointments to National Institutions.

Provincial-territorial role in international trade negotiations, agreements and fora

Premiers agreed that a written agreement on the provincial-territorial role in Canada's international negotiations, agreements and other fora is essential. While providing suitable flexibility to accommodate different venues, the agreement should establish an efficient and effective mechanism to ensure full provincial and territorial participation in Canada's international activities that affect their jurisdiction and responsibilities, including development of positions, involvement in negotiations, and management of disputes. Premiers noted that, to date, the federal government has approached this matter positively, and some progress has been made on working toward a federal-provincial-territorial agreement. Provincial-territorial ministers participating in this process were

asked to complete their mandate as soon as possible, with the goal of recommending an agreement at the next Council of the Federation meeting.

Strengthening Privacy Protection

Premier Campbell briefed other Premiers on the potential privacy concerns related to the *USA Patriot Act*. Premier Campbell committed to share British Columbia's submission to the Provincial Information and Privacy Commissioner on specific steps that are being taken to enhance the privacy protection of personal information.

Premier Campbell also affirms British Columbia's commitment to work with the rest of Canada to mitigate any risk posed by the *USA Patriot Act*.

E-government

Premiers announced that a Symposium on e-government will be held in Québec City in spring 2005. Representatives from provincial and territorial governments will share their experiences with international experts on information and communication technologies. Premiers indicated that the sharing of information and expertise between provinces and territories contributes to the identification of best practices and will assist governments in more effectively implementing their respective on-line government strategies.

On Helping Those Affected by Emergencies ...

Protecting Canadians and Their Communities

Confirming the need for a strong and coordinated national system for emergency management and public safety, Premiers agreed to a framework for interprovincial/territorial emergency management mutual aid. The framework is based on a well established agreement between Quebec and the Atlantic provinces and six New England states. In recent years, teams from neighbouring jurisdictions have responded to emergencies including floods, forest fires, hurricanes and ice storms.

Building on this type of cooperation, the Premiers' framework establishes procedures for governments to call upon each other for assistance during public emergencies, and ensures that emergency responders from a neighbouring province or territory are treated the same way for legal and licensing purposes as emergency responders in the province or territory which made the request. Premiers directed their Ministers responsible for Emergency Measures to take the next steps in implementing the framework.

To ensure that cooperation on emergency management and public safety takes place among all governments, Premiers also directed their Ministers to work with the federal government to:

- Develop a coordinated strategy for emergency response and readiness for Canada, respecting provincial and territorial laws and plans already in place, and initiate a joint strategic review of emergency management to identify gaps and priorities.
- Strengthen the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements to prevent downloading by the federal government of costs related to disaster recovery and establish a new program to provide substantial financial assistance for disasters such as the SARS outbreak and the BSE crisis.
- Renew the federal commitment to emergency management training.
- Develop a Canada-wide system for emergency public alerting.

Premiers Hamm and Doer will provide a progress report on Ministers' actions at the next meeting of the Council of the Federation.

On Reaching Out to Young Canadians ...

Premiers were pleased with the success of the Youth Forum. They were impressed with the calibre of participants and look forward to using the report from the Youth Forum in the development of a longer term Council of the Federation Youth Initiative.

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