

## Premiers create the Council of the Federation

**Charlottetown, December 5, 2003** – Canada's Premiers proudly announced today in Charlottetown the creation of the Council of the Federation. It is a new institution for a new era in collaborative intergovernmental relations. The Council, comprised of the thirteen Premiers, will meet at least twice annually with a first meeting to be held on February 23-24 in British Columbia. Premiers formally ushered in the Council with a signing ceremony.

The objective of the Council of the Federation is to improve the quality of life of 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 in 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.

Today is a starting point. The Council will make a difference to Canadians and break new ground, emphasizing issues where provinces and territories can effect change by working together. The work of the Council will reflect two themes: enhanced provincial-territorial collaboration; and more effective relations with the federal government.

Premiers identified the following priority areas for the initial focus of the Council's efforts:

- Improving health care for Canadians, by addressing health care reform and sustainability; and
- Strengthening the economic union, including enhancing internal trade, improving labour mobility, and harmonizing and streamlining regulation.

Premiers have created a steering committee to ensure the work of the Council is carried out. The steering committee will put in place a secretariat based in Ottawa. Premiers also directed the steering committee to develop a detailed work plan to achieve the objectives of the Council.

At its February meeting, the Council will approve the work plan and give direction on next steps.