



## **Premiers focus on affordability, housing, strategic infrastructure, and health**

**HALIFAX, November 6, 2023** – Canada’s Premiers are united in their commitment to take action on the affordability challenges facing Canadians, along with the need to improve health services, tackle housing issues, and strengthen strategic infrastructure.

Premiers\* gathered in Halifax to discuss how provinces and territories are working to address these challenges, noting that improving the lives of Canadians requires all governments to work together in a spirit of genuine collaboration.

Climate change is a key concern for Canadians. Provinces and territories are taking action to address climate change and have made significant investments over time to meet the needs of their jurisdictions. Premiers expressed concern that federal actions around the federal carbon tax have treated Canadians differently and expect the federal government to support all Canadians fairly. Premiers are unanimous in calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that federal policies and programs are delivered in a fair and equitable way to all Canadians, particularly in light of the affordability challenges being faced across the country.

The Prime Minister has not convened a full in-person First Ministers’ Meeting since December 2018 despite repeated requests from Premiers. Premiers reiterated their call for a First Ministers’ Meeting to discuss competitiveness and strategic infrastructure. They emphasized the need for predictable and flexible federal funding to support provincial and territorial governments in addressing the full spectrum of infrastructure challenges and priorities unique to their jurisdictions.

Premiers expect the federal government to provide sustaining operating funding of projects in which they invest, while respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Ahead of the federal fall economic statement, Premiers also called for constructive federal engagement and immediate action on a number of priority issues.

### **Strategic Infrastructure**

Provinces and territories need to be partners in federal infrastructure and housing programming. Premiers agreed to explore legislative frameworks similar to Québec that require provincial authorization before municipalities or public agencies enter into any agreements with the federal government.

Predictable and flexible federal funding that flows exclusively through provinces and territories is necessary to address unique needs and support long-term capital planning.

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\* The Northwest Territories was unable to participate due to the Territorial election. Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok was unable to participate due to obligations in the Legislative Assembly.

Premiers called on the federal government to include the new infrastructure program in the fall economic statement. Premiers are opposed to application-based funding in the new infrastructure program and call for provincial and territorial allocations and greater flexibility and coordination across all levels of government.

Premiers reminded the federal government of its responsibility with respect to federal infrastructure, including economic corridors, railways, and ports.

Federal programs that create duplicative processes, prescribe certain kinds of infrastructure projects over others, or pit provinces and territories against each other, work against the collective betterment of Canadians.

Canada's Premiers discussed the everyday impact of inflation and how to combat this through investments in strategic infrastructure that improve productivity and strengthen supply chains. Community, economic, and competitive infrastructure is critical for building strong communities, improving affordability, and enhancing the prosperity of Canadians.

The increasing frequency of natural disasters, such as wildfires and flooding, highlights the importance of adaptation in response to a changing climate. Additional federal funding and resources are urgently needed now to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of future events. The federal government must work closely and transparently with provinces and territories on the modernization of the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.

## **Housing**

Premiers emphasized the critical need for collaboration between all levels of government with respect to addressing the housing crisis. Provinces and territories need to have a key role in the development and execution of federal housing programs: the issue cannot be solved by the federal government and municipalities acting without the meaningful involvement and support of provinces and territories.

Premiers also discussed the link between infrastructure and housing priorities. Provinces and territories are making investments and policy/regulatory changes to support the availability and affordability of housing to meet labour market demand, address homelessness, and welcome newcomers. On top of this, many Canadians have lost homes to wildfires, flooding, and other forms of extreme weather. While recent announcements by the federal government are a step in the right direction, more can and must be done. Effective intergovernmental collaboration between provincial/territorial governments and the federal government could support a range of solutions adapted to the diverse realities and needs of the country's regions, including increased housing pressures as a result of the growing population including immigrants and asylum seekers.

Premiers also called on the federal government to address the chronic underfunding of housing in Indigenous communities.

## **Health**

Premiers expressed their deep appreciation for the work and dedication of all frontline health care workers.

Provinces and territories are taking action in response to Canadians' priorities across the care continuum, including addressing wait times and access to primary care, mental health and substance use services, and recruiting and retaining health care professionals.

Premiers noted the recent public acknowledgement by the federal government that provinces and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over the planning, organization and management of their health care systems, and expect present and future collaboration with the federal government to be truly reflective of this. The health care needs of Canadians are not the same across the country, and addressing current and future challenges cannot be viewed as a one-size-fits-all solution.

Premiers welcomed the decision of the College of Family Physicians of Canada to pause consideration of a third year of family practice residency. Provinces and territories stressed the importance of medical residency requirements for family medicine remaining at two years given ongoing health and human resource shortages across the country.

Premiers also met for a dedicated summit focused on health innovation at Nova Scotia's Health Innovation Hub. Health care is a top priority for premiers, and they remain focused on providing the world class health care services that Canadians expect and deserve.

The meeting in Halifax was the first meeting hosted by Premier Tim Houston as Chair of the Council of the Federation.

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