



Western Premiers focus on jobs, the economy, and collaborative relationships at their meeting in Edmonton

Western Premiers met today in Edmonton to discuss their shared priorities of ensuring a strong, sustainable, innovative, and competitive economy that works for all western and northern Canadians. They held productive discussions on a number of areas of mutual interest, such as market access, internal trade, mental health and addictions, health sustainability, climate change, a shifting Arctic, and the current state of wildfires and permafrost thawing.

Premiers Committed to Enhancing Competitiveness and Sustainable Development through Economic Corridors

Western and Northern Canada has an abundance of natural resources that help provide secure jobs and economic prosperity across the country. Appropriate infrastructure, including access to adequate port capacity, roads, airports, rail lines, pipelines, transmission lines, and communications infrastructure, is critical to attracting the capital needed to create and sustain the economic prosperity Canadians have come to expect.

Premiers discussed serious challenges in getting their products to domestic and international markets. There is a need to innovate to increase certainty for investors and help get major infrastructure and transmission projects done in a timely fashion while minimizing environmental impacts, lowering the costs of environmental assessments, and maintaining high standards of Indigenous consultation and science-based assessments. These innovative options should include further discussions on pan-Canadian economic corridors, both east-west and north-south, to increase productivity by distributing energy, communications, and economic potential currently locked in a single province or territory to other jurisdictions.

Economic corridors could expand markets for Canadian energy, including hydro-electricity, and natural gas. This will also create vital transportation and economic links between Canada's North and the rest of Canada.

Premiers also discussed the importance of building partnerships with Indigenous communities on major projects for sustainable development to support increased participation in economic prosperity.

Premiers agreed that each jurisdiction would benefit from improved access to new markets and committed to bringing this topic up at the upcoming Council of the Federation meeting in July.

Premiers Committed to Responsible Resource Development and Action on Climate Change

Premiers agreed on the importance of balancing environmental stewardship and climate action with economic growth and competitiveness. As Western and Northern Canada's population and economy continue to grow, people and industry will require energy resources. Premiers agreed that economic stability and energy security for their jurisdictions need to go hand-in-hand with sustained action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Premiers noted the ongoing need for collaborative action on adaptation and mitigation strategies to address climate change. They also discussed the need for sufficient federal funding to be available in a timely fashion to support local adaptation and mitigation priorities, including providing the balance of the Low-Carbon Economy Fund to each province and territory equitably.

Western provinces and territories are leading the development of innovative and cleaner technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, spur economic growth, and support sustainable development. Premiers have directed their officials to develop an inventory of Western Canadian best practices that have demonstrated a reduction in the environmental footprint of industry.

Premiers call on the federal government to work with provinces, territories, and international governments to establish a process to recognize the global reduction of greenhouse gases resulting from the use of energy and technologies consistent with Article 6 of the Paris Declaration. This includes ensuring provinces and territories get full credit for reductions resulting from actions in their jurisdictions.

Premiers reiterated that provinces and territories will continue to work on climate change plans that address their local needs and priorities, as well as contributing to Canada's greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Premiers call on the federal government to work with provinces and territories on its implementation of the Species at Risk Act (SARA) to ensure the protection of species is

balanced with consideration for resource development, workers, and communities and addresses the needs of Indigenous peoples.

Premiers expressed a variety of views including economic and environmental implications of federal policy initiatives, including:

- federal carbon pricing backstop;
- federal Clean Fuel Standard;
- *Impact Assessment Act* and other acts governing the federal environmental assessment approach (Bill C-69);
- *Fisheries Act* (Bill C-68);
- Amendments to the federal *Oceans Act* and *Canada Petroleum Resources Act* (Bill C-55); and
- *Oil Tanker Moratorium Act* (Bill C-48).

Some Premiers expressed concern that the federal government is disregarding provincial and territorial jurisdiction over resource development and land management, as well as their world-class regulatory capacity and experience. However, Premiers were unanimous in calling on the federal government to respect provincial and territorial jurisdiction and expertise in these areas. Premiers further agreed on the need for a constructive discussion on intergovernmental coordination in cases where federal policies, decisions or legislation have the potential to impinge on areas of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, including decisions about land use and resource development.

Premiers Committed to Improving Internal Trade

Premiers agreed on the importance of ongoing ambitious efforts to reduce barriers to internal trade. They discussed progress made to date, including moving forward on adoption of common standards for occupational health and safety equipment and working to harmonize transportation regulations. Premiers are committed to priority action on internal trade barriers given the key importance to western and northern economies. Premiers call on the federal government to also accelerate work to address barriers in its areas of jurisdiction.

Premiers agreed to prioritize further work on barrier reduction, with a particular focus on increasing consumer choice for alcoholic beverages in a socially responsible way. Premiers noted that Saskatchewan recently has and British Columbia and Yukon plan to eliminate personal exemption limits for alcohol transported across provincial/territorial boundaries, as is already the case for Manitoba and Alberta.

Premiers also agreed to quickly advance work to incorporate rules into the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) to open up the financial services sector in Canada so providers from all provinces and territories can grow and compete in this sector. Premiers welcome proposed changes to the CFTA to permit parties to reduce their exceptions unilaterally. Premiers are committed to take further steps to increase the ambition of the CFTA through additional work to substantially reduce, or eliminate,

party-specific exceptions by 2020, other than exceptions that are constitutionally mandated. Premiers look forward to meaningful action on this critical issue with their colleagues at this summer's Council of the Federation meeting.

Premiers tasked their Transportation Ministers with reviewing the rules for transporting oil service rigs between western provinces to address differences and harmonize wherever possible. Premiers will also seek the cooperation of the federal government to reduce barriers and make it easier for service rigs to safely transport across provincial/territorial borders.

Premiers Committed to Improved Labour Mobility for Workers

Premiers reiterated their commitment to ensuring Canadians have the skills and inter-jurisdictional mobility they need. Premiers also highlighted the importance of addressing employment barriers for underrepresented populations. Providing skill development and employment training, including for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples will ensure all Western Canadians can participate and flourish in the labour market.

Premiers discussed the importance of labour mobility to a strong and agile Western workforce. Existing domestic trade agreements such as the CFTA and the NWPTA, as well as ongoing multilateral initiatives, such as the Provincial-Territorial Apprenticeship Mobility Protocol, provide a foundation to address barriers to interprovincial mobility.

Premiers acknowledged that the mobility of skilled tradespeople and apprentices is an important part of ensuring the free flow of labour and the ability to support major projects throughout the West. Premiers are committed to exploring whether there are outstanding barriers to the mobility of licensed professionals, skilled tradespeople, and apprentices in the West and identifying possible opportunities for further Western collaboration including working toward the mutual recognition of occupational qualifications.

Premiers also discussed the importance of timely, fair, and efficient foreign qualification recognition processes to ensure full participation of foreign trained Canadians and newcomers in Canada's economy. While significant improvements have been made to streamline the process for recognizing foreign qualifications, provincial and territorial collaboration is required to continue to identify gaps and, if found, improve the process of recognizing foreign qualifications. Western provinces and territories committed to ongoing work to identify possible areas of joint interest where faster action can be taken by credentialing bodies and associations to standardize their processes.

Premiers Committed to Expanding Export Markets

Premiers discussed the continued importance of international trade to Western and Northern Canada's economy and are united in their goal of attracting investment to create prosperity. International exports account for about one-third of Canada's GDP and one-in-six Canadian jobs. Premiers noted the new opportunities to diversify Western and Northern Canada's trade through various international agreements.

Premiers also discussed ongoing unfounded market access restrictions, such as Chinese import restrictions on Canadian canola, pork, and beef, and the ongoing duties imposed by the United States on Canadian softwood lumber. Premiers support the federal government in its work to have these restrictions and tariffs removed and called for all appropriate actions to be taken to have these issues resolved in order to restore certainty for Canadian workers and businesses. They also called on the federal government to re-evaluate the 2017 softwood lumber aid package to ensure it supports the long-term success of the industry, as communities and industry adapt to changing circumstances.

Premiers discussed the Canada-United States Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and called for all signatories to work quickly to ratify the agreement to provide certainty to business and workers across Western Canada. Further, Premiers encourage member states to ratify the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Premiers noted with concern the ongoing section 232 investigation by the United States into uranium and called on the federal government to continue its efforts to resolve these issues and restore certainty to Canadian industry. They noted the negative impacts of the imposition of US 232 tariffs on the steel and aluminum industries on both sides of the border and the stability that removal of the tariffs has created.

Premiers Committed to Strengthening Canada's Position in the Arctic

Premiers discussed recent international policy papers and statements on the Arctic, and the need for Canada to strengthen its position in the Arctic region. They agreed that the Arctic is essential to Canada and that significant investment and tangible action is required to protect and more fully take advantage of Canada's vast potential and opportunity as an Arctic and northern nation.

Premiers see this as a nation-building opportunity and call on federal parties to articulate how they will commit to advancing progress in Arctic and Northern Canada.

Premiers Committed to Strong Health Services for Canadians

Premiers discussed the current state of the Canadian federation, including the current state of federal fiscal transfers in Canada.

Universal public health care is fundamentally important to Canadians. Since the beginning of Medicare more than half a century ago, health care services have evolved significantly to meet the complex and integrated care needs of patients. Over this same period, the original equal health funding partnership between provinces/territories and the federal government has eroded significantly. Despite this, provinces and territories are continuing to strengthen Canada's health care systems by improving access to diagnostic services, funding new lifesaving drugs, investing in new technologies and introducing innovative, regionally and culturally appropriate models to provide better care and sustainably manage provincial and territorial health budgets.

The portion of health care expenditures funded by provinces and territories is now approaching 80%. This represents the largest single component of all provincial/territorial budgets. The federal share of health funding is on track to further decline over the next decade due to the federal decision to reduce the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) growth rate beginning in 2017/18. The diminishing federal funding partnership is adding to pressures created by population aging and other factors, which are projected to increase health costs by an average of 5.2% annually over the longer term. Premiers call on the federal government to return to a fair and sustainable health funding partnership with provinces and territories, and to ensure evidence-based growth to the CHT going forward.

Provinces and territories have implemented innovative service delivery options to ensure their residents have access to timely, quality services consistent with the universal health care system. Premiers call on the federal government to respect provincial constitutional and territorial jurisdiction over health to ensure provinces and territories have the flexibility needed to deal with emerging issues while ensuring federal funding continues to flow.

Premiers Committed to Addressing Mental Health and Addiction

Premiers discussed the ongoing opioid, methamphetamine, and alcohol crises taking place in Western Canada. Premiers are united in their continued commitment to provide meaningful support to those experiencing challenges with addiction, including providing services and programs related to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and reduction of stigma, as well as enforcement against traffickers.

Premiers discussed the linkages between addiction and mental health issues and pledged to work within their own jurisdictions to provide support to those suffering from complex issues relating to addiction.

Premiers further emphasized the need for an integrated continuum of care that is both culturally appropriate and person-centred. Care at the community level that focuses on education, early intervention, effective treatment for those who most need it, and follow-up and recovery services to ensure positive outcomes provides a demonstrable way forward for all jurisdictions.

Premiers discussed the use of Drug Treatment Courts or Community Wellness Courts as innovative examples where positive outcomes have been seen. Ensuring participants have access to programming that is comprehensive, including treatment for addiction, drug testing, incentives, and social services support has resulted in better outcomes for those involved in the criminal justice system with addictions issues. Premiers committed to sharing best practices on the effectiveness of Drug Treatment and Wellness Courts taking place in their jurisdictions, and highlighting areas for improvement and continued use at their next Western Premiers' Conference.

Premiers further noted that the issue of mental health and addiction will be raised with their colleagues at this summer's Council of the Federation meeting. Premiers urged the federal government to increase work on interdiction of illicit drugs at Canada's ports and through the postal service.

Premiers Committed to Productive Federal/Provincial/Territorial Relationships

Cooperative relationships between all orders of government are critical to ensuring Canadians have the services and supports they need from their governments.

Ensuring the federal-provincial-territorial governments work together to: make life easier and more affordable; ensure timely delivery of services that people count on; support a strong, sustainable economy; help Canada and Canadians face the pressing challenges of the twenty-first century; and achieve reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is fundamental to any work governments undertake.

There is a need to work collaboratively to ensure all Canadians, in all regions, and from every background can reach their potential. To that end, Premiers have proposed a series of intergovernmental principles to support and drive the work of the federation for years to come. Premiers call on the federal government to ensure that work between governments is collaborative and:

- respectful of the division of powers in the federation;
- recognizes provincial/territorial diversity in the needs and approaches to local problems;
- acknowledges the equal, non-hierarchical relationship between the orders of government;
- aligns fiscal resources with jurisdictional responsibilities;
- and accepts that each government is accountable to its own citizens.

Premiers call on all federal party leaders to adopt these principles and commit to a cooperative approach to federalism that respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction to ensure Canadians receive the supports and services they most need from their governments.

Premiers Discussed Natural Disaster Funding and Support

Premiers noted the challenges of climate change in Western and Northern Canada. Temperatures in the North are changing rapidly, while recent wildfires in Western Canada and permafrost thawing in the North have reinforced the need to prioritize a coordinated approach to disaster adaptation and mitigation response in these regions.

Premiers applaud the work of emergency personnel, including firefighters who have battled massive wildfires in Alberta and British Columbia again this spring, and reinforced their commitment to sharing resources and supports as required to help those most affected by these disasters.

Premiers discussed the impacts of recent natural disasters and climate change, particularly on Northern and Arctic communities in Canada. These include permafrost thaw, sea-ice decline, coastal erosion, and glacial retreat, among others. Permafrost thawing varies across the North affecting each territory differently, causing damage and shortening the expected lifespan of existing infrastructure, including buildings, roads, mines, and runways, increases uncertainty around future infrastructure projects.

They also discussed the need for greater collaboration with the federal government around climate adaptation and mitigation, as well as disaster mitigation and response for all jurisdictions affected by natural disasters. Premiers called for less prescriptive and more flexible access to federal disaster mitigation funding programs. Premiers also called for the restoration of the lower threshold for accessing Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) funding. Premiers noted that these issues will be raised with their colleagues at the summer Council of the Federation meeting in July.

Premiers Announce 2020 Western Premiers' Conference

Premiers confirmed Manitoba will host the 2020 Western Premiers' Conference during Manitoba's 150th anniversary.