



**2022 WESTERN  
PREMIERS' CONFERENCE**  
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**For Immediate Release**

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**Western Premiers Focus on Health Care, Economic Recovery and Security**

Western Premiers\* met in-person for the first time in more than two years today in Regina, Saskatchewan, where they discussed shared priorities for improving the lives of Western Canadians. Premiers discussed the affordability challenges facing Western Canadians, the importance of fostering a strong post-pandemic economic recovery, and strategies for action in the following areas:

- a renewed health care funding partnership;
- meeting labour market needs;
- resilient supply chains, trade infrastructure and corridors;
- internal trade;
- energy, food security and sustainable development; and,
- Arctic security and sovereignty.

Premiers discussed the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine. Nearly one-million people in Western Canada have Ukrainian roots. Premiers expressed their support for Ukraine and its people and are committed to welcoming Ukrainian evacuees. Timely information sharing is critical for ensuring a coordinated national approach and successful provincial and territorial reception and settlement efforts. Western Premiers would also welcome an ongoing discussion about federal resources to ensure Ukrainians can access the services they require to transition to life in Canada.

**Health Care**

High quality, timely health care is a key priority for Western Canadians. As we continue to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the sustainability of our health care systems is at a critical point. Western Premiers reaffirmed their commitment to the Council of the Federation's

efforts to negotiate a renewed health funding partnership with the federal government to ensure the health and well-being of Canadians. They emphasized the unanimous call of all 13 of Canada's Premiers for the federal government to increase its share of health funding to 35% through the Canada Health Transfer. Premiers are disappointed with the federal government's slow pace of negotiations to date and expressed their frustration with the failure of the federal government to discuss health care funding in good faith with provinces and territories. It is time for a First Ministers' Meeting to find a resolution on sustainable health care funding. There is no excuse for further delay on the part of the federal government.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health, substance use and drug overdose deaths. Premiers are committed to continuing efforts to combat the addictions crisis and increase access to culturally appropriate mental health and substance use supports.

### **Post COVID-19 Economy and Labour Market**

Ensuring employers have an adequate supply of skilled workers for strong economic growth and job creation is central to shared prosperity. Western Premiers agree on the importance of effective labour mobility and qualification recognition processes in addressing labour shortages. Western provinces and territories are continuing to invest in workers and employers. Premiers urge the federal government to strengthen its partnership through the Labour Market Transfer Agreements with provinces and territories to ensure sufficient, flexible and reliable funding to support the workforce of today and tomorrow.

A strategic approach to immigration is important for meeting Western Canadian labour market needs and supporting strong, vibrant communities. Expanding Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs is necessary because provinces and territories are best positioned to determine local and regional needs. Premiers call on the federal government to work with provinces and territories on economic immigration planning to ensure the necessary resources are in place for timely and efficient processing.

Premiers discussed the importance of adequate, suitable, and affordable housing to ensure a good quality of life for Western Canadians. Long-term, sustainable and flexible investments from the federal government in housing are necessary for strong economic growth and job creation across Canada.

### **Supply Chains, Trade Infrastructure and Corridors**

Western supply chains are critical to Canada's economic recovery and growth. Premiers discussed unprecedented supply chain interruptions due to global events, COVID-19 and severe weather. These disruptions are exacerbating affordability concerns for Canadians and businesses.

Premiers discussed the importance of maintaining Canada's advantageous position in global supply chains. Premiers called on the federal government to work with provinces and territories

to expand the capacity of Western gateways and trade corridors, and to streamline and expedite western port renewal projects. Premiers also support initiatives that will expand capacity of the Churchill rail and port systems and strengthen existing and emerging Northern supply routes.

The pandemic has highlighted other important gaps in Northern transportation infrastructure. Strong and efficient infrastructure is critical to ensure the reliable supply and export of goods and services between remote and Northern regions.

A resilient, efficient and sustainable transportation system is best achieved through collaboration. Premiers noted the federal government's commitment to strengthening critical trade infrastructure through the National Trade Corridors Fund, and the recent creation of the Supply Chain Task Force. They called for swift federal collaboration with Western provinces and territories to create a strategy that identifies key priorities to strengthen transportation corridors and supply chains across the West.

Premiers discussed serious challenges in getting products to domestic and international markets. The pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine and sky-rocketing food and energy prices all highlight the need to get goods to market. Western Premiers will look at innovative options that include pan-Canadian economic corridors to unlock potential in all provinces and territories.

### **Internal Trade**

Western Premiers have been taking ambitious action to reduce barriers to internal trade. They agreed to continue this work, given its importance to Western and Northern economies. The federal government has critical work to do in this area as it has the most exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Premiers call on the federal government to accelerate work to address barriers in its areas of jurisdiction.

### **Energy and Food Security and Sustainable Development**

Western Premiers discussed concerns regarding growing global energy and food demands, highlighted by Russia's war on Ukraine. They expressed deep concern about sky-rocketing food and fuel prices and their impact on consumers and businesses. Canada must continue to do its part in providing responsible, reliable and affordable energy and food to Canadians and the world. Western Canada is a global powerhouse, with critical minerals, energy and food products, and cleaner energy technologies that are indispensable to the economy of today and tomorrow. Premiers are committed to ensuring that these products continue to be reliably supplied by Western Canada to North America and beyond. Premiers discussed the potential for Western jurisdictions to supply the world with critical minerals and noted the importance of critical mineral development in supporting economic and cleaner growth.

Western Premiers discussed the importance of balancing economic growth and competitiveness with climate action and sustainability. They agreed that economic stability and energy security go hand-in-hand with actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They reiterated the importance of provincial and territorial climate change plans that address local priorities and contribute to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

Premiers agree that the federal government should not interfere in areas of provincial and territorial jurisdiction. They share concern about the lack of provincial and territorial consultation by the federal government during the development of its 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan. Premiers raised concerns with the limited eligibility criteria and applicability of the federal Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage tax credit, including the exclusion of enhanced oil recovery.

Premiers called on the federal government to collaborate with Western jurisdictions to support provincial and territorial plans to address climate change. They discussed the need for future federal climate and economic recovery investments to be determined in partnership, not imposed on provinces and territories, to build a strong and competitive Western economy. Premiers discussed opportunities for provinces and territories to take a leadership role at international negotiations and tables, such as the upcoming United Nations Conference of Parties (COP 27) taking place in November 2022.

Premiers discussed the recent ruling by the Court of Appeal of Alberta that found the federal *Impact Assessment Act* to be an unconstitutional intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. Western Premiers are currently assessing the decision and considering any future actions if appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

### **Arctic Security and Sovereignty**

Western Premiers agreed that the Arctic is essential to Canadian security, sovereignty and economic prosperity and that significant federal investment through increasing development and presence in Northern and Arctic regions is required to support thriving communities. They discussed Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other foreign activities in the Arctic and the implications these have for Arctic security.

Prosperous, healthy, vibrant communities and people contribute to the sovereignty of the Canadian Arctic. Canada's economic security also benefits from the North's resource and trade potential, including the development of critical minerals into national wealth and prosperity, while investing in the people who have always made the North their home.

The federal government has committed to security priorities in this area through the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. Premiers call on the federal government to identify new financial resources to support sovereignty in Canada's North.

*\*Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeagok was unable to attend and participate in the 2022 Western Premiers Conference.*