



Communiqué 2014 Northern Premiers' Forum

Working together to build a better North

YELLOWKNIFE (September 4, 2014) - Territorial Premiers met today for the 12th annual Northern Premiers' Forum.

The forum provides Premiers with the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern, develop made-in-the-North solutions, and promote northern interests. This year, the Premiers renewed the Northern Co-operation Accord, the formal agreement that outlines how the three governments work together. The Premiers also launched *A Northern Vision: Building a Better North*, an update to the territories' broad collaborative vision originally published in 2007.

Mental wellness

Premiers agreed that mental health is a vital part of the overall well-being of communities, families and individuals. They discussed the challenges of delivering mental health services in remote communities and noted that technology is commonly used in the delivery of other types of healthcare. Premiers directed their Health Ministers to consider ways to advance E-Mental Health, and other methods of delivering mental health services in remote communities and report back on the outcome of their work at the 2015 Northern Premiers' Forum.

Housing

Premiers highlighted the importance of access to stable and affordable housing to northern families, communities and the economies of the territories.

As noted in *A Northern Vision*, Premiers agreed that the economic potential of the territories will be fully realized through the construction of strategic infrastructure, such as housing, which will encourage investment, enable job creation and improve the standard of living. Key to this is a robust private sector able to participate in meeting the housing needs of the North.

Premiers also recognize the important role that the federal government must play in partnership with the territories as they work to strengthen the North's housing stock, communities and economy.

Energy

Premiers agreed that clean, reliable, affordable energy is the backbone of a sustainable economy, is essential for the well-being of northerners, and fosters investment and economic growth in the North.

Premiers discussed the need for affordable electricity, especially in off-grid communities, an issue that significantly impacts northern communities. This issue was an area of focus at the 2014 Western Premiers Conference in Iqaluit and again at the meeting of Canada's Premiers last week in Charlottetown. The Premiers stressed the importance of working together in a number of different areas, including renewable and alternative forms of energy. They noted the significant profile given to energy issues in *A Northern Vision*.

Northern infrastructure

Premiers discussed the vital role of modern infrastructure in developing Canada's North. Many northern communities are highly dependent on air and marine transportation services, owing to the lack of reliable road access. The construction of all-season roads, improving marine facilities and navigational charts for northern Canada is necessary to support the sustainable development of the North's rich resource base. It will also improve the safety and effectiveness of critical industry and community marine resupply and resource export operations. In addition, Premiers noted the significant impact that a strong telecommunications network has on the lives of Northerners and to the business community.

Premiers noted the importance of the investments the federal government continues to make in northern infrastructure. They emphasized that a strong infrastructure network encourages development in the North, which benefits northern communities and Canada.

Arctic Council

As the second half of Canada's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council unfolds and the Ministerial meeting approaches, Premiers reaffirmed their commitment to working with Canada to ensure territorial priorities continue to be reflected in Canada's Arctic Council engagement. As *A Northern Vision* emphasizes, reaching out to our circumpolar neighbours through the Arctic Council is essential.

Premiers are pleased that the Canadian Chairmanship has consistently hosted meetings in the North. Premiers encouraged Canada to continue to involve territorial governments in Arctic Council work. Premiers also committed to working with Canada to ensure there is youth engagement with the Arctic Council.

Pan-Territorial Adaptation Strategy

Premiers also received an update on the Pan-Territorial Adaptation Strategy, originally released at the 2011 Northern Premiers' Forum. The initiative, which grew from the previous *Northern Vision*, has resulted in partnerships across the three territories to address climate change issues and identify common actions and measures in response to this emerging problem. This partnership continues to carry out important work to address the challenging issue of climate change, and Premiers look forward to receiving future updates.

Next meeting

Premier Taptuna confirmed that the 2015 Northern Premiers' Forum will be held in Nunavut.