



### **Successful Fifth Annual Summer Meeting for the Council of the Federation**

**Québec City, July 18, 2008** – Premiers concluded the fifth annual meeting of the Council of the Federation. “This meeting gave us the opportunity to make progress on major issues affecting all of our citizens, including labour mobility, internal and external trade, and the environment while also celebrating together the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Québec City,” declared Jean Charest, Premier of Québec.

Premiers stressed that full labour market participation and unimpeded mobility of labour is vital to Canada’s economic growth.

Emphasizing the critical importance of full labour mobility for all Canadians, Premiers agreed to amend the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) by January 1, 2009. These amendments will provide that any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one province or territory shall be recognized as qualified to practice that occupation by all other provinces and territories. Premiers further directed that any exceptions to full labour market mobility will have to be clearly identified and justified as necessary to meet a legitimate objective such as the protection of public health or safety.

By the 2009 summer meeting of the Council of the Federation, these amendments will result in mutual recognition of occupational credentials between all provinces and territories.

Premiers announced an enhanced and effective dispute resolution mechanism to enforce AIT dispute panel recommendations for government-to-government disputes. Effective January 1, 2009, the strengthened mechanism includes the use of monetary penalties to a maximum of \$5 million.

The new mechanism will apply to all disputes under the AIT - including labour mobility. This, along with the Premiers’ willingness to legislate, if necessary, will ensure full labour mobility rights for all Canadians.

Immigration can also be a vital tool in addressing labour market shortages. Premiers noted that the current backlog of 925,000 visa applications is unacceptable and urged the federal government to reduce this to a more manageable 200,000 applications by 2011. The Council also stressed that to more effectively plan for future labour market needs, the federal government must work with provinces and territories to plan immigration levels on a multi-year basis.

Premiers agreed that a range of initiatives are required to attract and retain more people in the labour market to address labour shortages. They announced a symposium will be held in Newfoundland and Labrador this year that will bring together experts and stakeholders to consider the most effective ways to improve labour market participation.

Premiers agreed that access to housing has become an important issue and must be addressed if Canada is to achieve full labour market participation to help meet the demands of our growing economy. Premiers stressed the importance of renewing several cost-shared funding agreements and continuing the federal funding programs for housing due to terminate in 2009. Premiers invited the federal government to engage with provinces and territories on an urgent basis and to inform provinces and territories of their intentions with respect to housing policies in Canada. To this end, Premiers asked their Ministers responsible for Housing to meet this fall and to invite their federal counterpart. Saskatchewan will host this meeting.

“We will ensure full labour mobility rights for citizens and the Agreement on Internal Trade will now have an effective dispute settlement mechanism. Meeting the labour market needs of our strong economy is critical to our growth, and I am very pleased that the Council of the Federation has made real progress,” said Premier Brad Wall, Vice-Chair of the Council.

Regarding international relations, Premiers underlined the importance of the special relationship which exists between Canada and the U.S., stressing in particular the need to maintain the North American Free Trade Agreement. They also discussed the trade mission to China which the Council of the Federation will undertake in November, jointly with the Canada China Business Council.

Premiers underlined the importance of transforming the relationship between Canada and the European Union into a stronger partnership. Premiers support and urge the commencement of negotiations at the next summit between Canada and the European Union for a trans-Atlantic economic agreement. Premiers expressed concerns about the negative impact that a ban on seal products would have in these negotiations. With a view towards diversifying trade, they stressed the importance of concluding free trade agreements with other important trading partners in the Asia-Pacific region.

Premiers thanked Premier Graham of New Brunswick, for chairing the Council of the Federation during the past year. “Premier Graham’s leadership as Chair of the Council of the Federation helped advance the work of the Council, most notably pertaining to improvements to the Agreement on Internal Trade and made this past year a very successful one,” declared Premier Charest.

On the environment, and more specifically climate change, Premiers assessed the progress accomplished and released a report on progress made since the Council’s summer meeting in Moncton last year. They received reports on the work arising out of the forums on Climate Change Adaptation which took place in the last six months in Vancouver and in Toronto, which were respectively chaired by Premiers Campbell and McGuinty.

In the context of rising energy prices, the Council will emphasize energy efficiency and conservation by working together and sharing best practices. Premiers today committed to achieving a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020 in their respective jurisdictions. They agreed on a five point plan for achieving this:

- Enhance the Model National Energy Code for Buildings by 25% by 2011;
- Add energy efficiency as the fifth core objective into the National Building Code of Canada;
- Increase the numbers of energy-using products covered by the minimum energy performance standards;

- Adopt green building policies for new construction of government-funded facilities, including sustainable procurement guidelines for energy and water use; and,
- Implement a public or private mechanism in each jurisdiction so that individual homeowners have access to energy efficiency home audits and assistance with energy efficiency retrofits.

Furthermore, Nova Scotia Premier Rodney MacDonald will convene an energy efficiency conference by the end of September. Premiers discussed green energy technologies and have agreed to hold a series of forums to promote awareness and understanding of green technologies and to share knowledge in this area.

Premiers today noted their pleasure at being able to take part this week in the celebrations marking Québec City's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Premiers took this historic opportunity to celebrate the vitality of Canada's Francophone communities and to note the contribution of the Canadian Francophonie to enriching the Canadian reality.

While recognizing the ethnic and cultural diversity of Canada's Francophonie, Canada's Francophone communities speak the same language, share a culture, and are united by bonds that transcend the physical distance between its members.

Premiers recognize the importance that the Francophone community has, and continues to play in shaping a diverse and inclusive Canadian society. Premiers also note that each jurisdiction is working within their own unique circumstances and experiences to help ensure that all citizens, including those of Canada's Francophone communities, are able to prosper and reach their full potential.

More detailed communiqués are issued by the Council of the Federation on each of the topics discussed by Premiers.

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