

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 12, 2007**

## COMMUNIQUÉ

Halifax, Nova Scotia – Nova Scotia Premier Rodney MacDonald chaired the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers today at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Premiers Shawn Graham of New Brunswick, Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island, and Deputy Premier Tom Rideout of Newfoundland and Labrador attended the meeting.

The premiers focused their attention on strengthening regional cooperation in Atlantic Canada, recognizing the economic and social benefits associated with a competitive business environment.

### **Atlantic Gateway**

Premiers agree on the need for early marketing and investment in the Atlantic Gateway to raise awareness of its competitive advantage and to strengthen the efficiency of the multimodal transportation system linking the gateway to key markets. They encourage an accelerated implementation with the federal government on their shared Memorandum of Understanding to identify key infrastructure, policy and regulatory enhancements in support of the development of the Atlantic Gateway. They note that timely access to federal funding will be critical to ensuring that this region is internationally competitive, and call upon the Prime Minister and the federal government to move quickly and expedite the process of funding the Atlantic Gateway initiative.

Atlantic Canada is a natural gateway for the flow of goods, people and services to and from traditional and emerging markets such as India and China. Premiers recognize the strategic opportunity in leveraging the region's advantages in geography, transportation, and commerce that can enable Canada to attract a larger share of global trade to the benefit of each of the Atlantic provinces and Canada as a whole.

### **Atlantic Canada Transportation Strategy**

Premiers recognize that a safe, efficient and sustainable transportation system remains a key element of Atlantic Canada's prosperity and therefore direct their ministers responsible for transportation to present a transportation strategy with a vision for a state-of-the-art transportation system in Atlantic Canada that supports economic and social development in the region.

**Atlantic Energy Framework**

The Atlantic premiers recognize the significant impact that energy has on the economy and the everyday lives of Atlantic Canadians and expressed their commitment to position the region as a leader in energy conservation and generation.

They are pleased to note that significant progress has been made in the development of an Atlantic energy framework, which will provide the basis for increased cooperation among their respective governments and allow Atlantic Canadians to enjoy the environmental, social and economic benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy development.

They directed Atlantic ministers of energy to complete a framework agreement focusing on collaborative initiatives in energy efficiency, biofuels, and renewable energy development.

**Promoting Atlantic Canada**

Following on the success of the January 2007 mission to Edmonton and Fort McMurray, Premiers agreed to continue efforts to promote the region's economic capacity, explore trade and investment opportunities, and build new partnerships which contribute to Atlantic Canada's prosperity.

**Atlantic Wellness**

Atlantic premiers recognize the serious and growing impact of chronic disease on citizens and on the health care system. Premiers are committed to collaborative efforts in promotion of wellness and healthy living in the region and direct Atlantic ministers responsible for health promotion and wellness to discuss a framework for collaborative action on health promotion and wellness including healthy food choices, physical activity, and a reduction in smoking.

**2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games**

The 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games offer an excellent opportunity for the Atlantic provinces to work together to showcase and build awareness of our part of the country to the world. Premiers agreed to explore collaboration around an Atlantic pavilion and other opportunities.

**Improving Rules and Regulations for Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

The Atlantic premiers acknowledged the consultation conducted by ministers responsible with stakeholders to promote awareness of current Atlantic agreements and to target key areas in which opportunities exist for additional harmonization or streamlining of regulations.

**Impact of Changes to Criminal Legislation**

Premiers express concern about the cumulative cost impacts of the current criminal law amendments which have been introduced, and in some cases, passed, by the federal government. While premiers recognize that amending the Criminal Code and other federal criminal legislation is the jurisdiction of the federal government, the provinces are responsible for administering this legislation. Premiers direct ministers responsible for justice to prepare a joint report to the federal government on the cost impacts for the

Atlantic provinces, requesting federal cost-sharing to assist with the proposed legislation. The report should place particular emphasis on the cost impacts related to capital and operational costs of the justice system.

**Impact of a Strong Canadian Dollar**

Premiers recognize the impact of the strong Canadian dollar on Atlantic Canada, in particular on manufacturing and traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry and the fishery.

Premiers welcome proposals from the federal government aimed at improving the competitiveness of manufacturing and traditional industries, as committed to in the October federal Speech from the Throne.

Premiers recommend that the federal government adopt measures to improve innovation and productivity, consider transitional programs for affected sectors and aggressively market Canadian products to international markets.

For further information, please contact:

Marie-Andrée Bolduc, New Brunswick (506) 453-2144

Elizabeth Matthews, Newfoundland and Labrador (709) 729-3960

Lori Lee Oates, Office of Minister Rideout (709) 729-3733/690-8403;

Joe Gillis, Nova Scotia (902) 497-7263

Geoff Townsend, Prince Edward Island (902) 368-4400