

## **Council of Atlantic Premiers**

### **Media Backgrounder**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Saint John, NB (May 26, 2014)** – Premier David Alward chaired today's meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, welcoming Premiers Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island, Tom Marshall of Newfoundland and Labrador and Stephen McNeil of Nova Scotia. Premiers' discussions focused on creating jobs and economic development for the Atlantic region.

#### ***Atlantic Workforce Partnership:***

Atlantic Canada has over 350 major investment projects with a value of more than \$70 billion in various stages of development. A skilled and stable workforce is key to maximizing the economic opportunities associated with the development of these projects.

The Atlantic Workforce Partnership, created by the Council of Atlantic Premiers in 2012, was established to strengthen regional cooperation in a number of areas addressing skilled workforce issues including workforce development, certification, standards, labour mobility, skills training, immigrant recruitment and retention, supply chain issues, and apprenticeship.

Atlantic Canada is leading the country in harmonizing apprenticeship training benefiting both apprentice entering the trade and employers by establishing consistency, improving mobility, and achieving higher completion rates.

Today, Atlantic Premiers signed a Memorandum of Understanding clearly demonstrating their commitment to the Atlantic Harmonization Apprenticeship Project.

Within the next four years, the Atlantic provinces will harmonize 10 trades across the region, beginning with bricklayers, cooks, instrumentation and control technicians and construction electricians.

Through the AWP, the Atlantic provinces are collaborating on a broad spectrum of initiatives to support labour force development. Areas of focus include developing timely information about labour market needs, providing online training for employers and workers, promoting the Atlantic region as a destination for new immigrants, retention and repatriation of workers and addressing the skills development needs of Atlantic Canada's youth.

Premiers directed the Atlantic Workforce Partnership to accelerate their efforts on apprenticeship and identify additional collaborative opportunities in workforce development.

At the summer meeting of Canada's Premiers, Atlantic Premiers will discuss opportunities to better align their public and post-secondary education systems with the needs of the labour market.

***Labour Market, Skills and Immigration:***

Stable and predictable funding for skills training is critically important to the people of Atlantic Canada. In 2013/14, \$324 million from Federal/Provincial Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) was invested in skills training to better equip Atlantic Canadians to meet the growing needs of employers across the region.

Premiers remain satisfied that the LMDAs are effective tools which support labour market objectives. Through these agreements, the federal government devolved the delivery of labour market programs in recognition that provinces and territories are best placed to understand and address the unique needs of their labour markets. This arrangement reduces overlap and duplication of services, streamlines services to citizens, and provides provinces with the flexibility to respond to local labour market needs and conditions.

The federal government has signaled its intent to alter these agreements. Premiers are open to discussing ways to improve labour market outcomes. These discussions must be based on respect for provincial jurisdiction and guided by the principle that no province be worse off.

Premiers reaffirmed the economic and social value of immigration to Atlantic Canada. Premiers agreed that recruiting and retaining immigrants is essential in meeting the labour and skills needs of the region and addressing Atlantic Canada's demographic challenges. They called on the federal government to provide provinces with increased flexibility in attracting immigrants.

Premiers directed ministers to consider innovative opportunities and collaborate on promoting Atlantic Canada as an immigration and investment destination of choice.

Temporary foreign workers are a key component in meeting the region's need for highly skilled workers and in addressing the unique labour requirements for Atlantic Canada's seasonal industries. The federal government's recent policy decision has created concerns for employers and temporary foreign workers throughout Atlantic Canada. Premiers are concerned about the potential impact on the region's ability to recruit immigrants as many temporary foreign workers seek permanent residency. Premiers called on the federal government to ensure the Temporary Foreign Worker program respects the needs of all regions and economic sectors in Canada, including seasonal industries.

***Energy Security and Development:***

Access to secure, stable and competitively-priced energy sources is a key factor in growing the economies of the Atlantic Provinces and is a strategic goal for the region. Premiers noted the importance of transportation and transmission infrastructure and eliminating bottlenecks to maximize the potential for energy development and accessing North American and global markets. This points to the need for greater development and investment in our own energy resources.

In recent months, many Atlantic Canadians have seen increasing energy prices. This impacts homeowners, small businesses and many of the region's large industries.

To remain competitive in the global economy, Atlantic Canada's industries need secure access to clean electricity, natural gas, and refined petroleum products at competitive and stable prices. Access to local energy supplies and the development of local energy sources, as well as access to diverse sources of energy from outside our region, will help drive economic growth across the Atlantic region.

Premiers highlighted the economic development and long term competitiveness opportunities that will be realized through enhanced inter-connection in the region.

Premiers support the efficient movement of energy resources East-West and the open and the non-discriminatory cross-territory transportation and transmission of energy. They also discussed the importance of the Northumberland Strait cable transmission project in moving towards a more integrated Atlantic Canadian transmission system.

As the energy sector is important to the economies of the Atlantic provinces, Premiers look forward to the completion of the Canadian Energy Strategy and discussing the region's energy potential at the meeting of Canada's Premiers in Charlottetown in August.

#### ***Marine Safety:***

Atlantic Premiers call on the federal government to conduct a thorough review of marine safety, and in particular take action to improve search and rescue response times. They will raise this issue with their colleagues at the Premiers' summer meeting .

#### ***International Trade:***

Premiers are interested in enhancing international trade that will grow wealth and benefit communities today and into the future. In 2013, CAP undertook its first trade mission outside North America in leading a delegation of Atlantic business and education leaders to Brazil. Atlantic businesses have identified export opportunities and generated sales as a result of the mission, while educational institutions established exchange and knowledge links with South America.

Engaging with key international trading partners will ensure that Atlantic Canada is staking its claim to global economic opportunities and strategic trading markets including the European Union. Atlantic Premiers are committed to continue to work together to expand trade and develop relationships with important international stakeholders.

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*For further information, please contact:*

Jesse Robichaud, Office of the Premier, New Brunswick (506) 453-2144

Milly Brown, Office of the Premier, Newfoundland and Labrador (709) 729-3960

Laurel Munroe, Office of the Premier, Nova Scotia (902) 222-0473

Guy Gallant, Office of the Premier, Prince Edward Island (902) 368-4400