

Ministerial Meeting Report Nunavut Legislative Assembly

Date: August 8, 2017

Title: 2017 Council of the Federation Summer Meeting

**Originating
Department:** Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

Participants: Premier Peter Taptuna

Nunavut Position:

The Council of the Federation (COF) is made up of all 13 of Canada's Premiers. COF enables Premiers to work collaboratively, form closer ties, foster constructive relationships between governments and show leadership on important issues that matter to Canadians. Meetings offer a unique opportunity to showcase Nunavut's strengths and highlight some of the challenges facing the territory.

Summary of the Meeting:

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley hosted the 2017 COF summer meeting in Edmonton from July 18-19, 2017.

The major agenda topics for the meeting were:

- Jobs and Economic Growth
 - Canada-US relations
 - Trade
 - Infrastructure
 - Jobs/skills training
 - Clean Growth
- Emerging Issues
 - Pharmacare
 - Refugees
 - Nutrition North
- Social and Justice Issues
 - Criminal justice
 - Opioids and Cannabis

Significant meeting outcomes include:

Canada – U.S. Relations: Premiers focused on the benefits of trade, commerce and investment between Canada and the U.S. Premiers met with Canada's Ambassador to the US and committed to continued provincial and territorial engagement and advocacy efforts with U.S. decision makers, industry and businesses.

NAFTA: Premiers affirmed that free and open trade under the NAFTA has had significant benefits for Canada, Mexico and the U.S. There is a need to maintain market access for goods and services to maintain the gains achieved. Premiers note that this is an opportunity to modernize and improve the agreement and expect to be actively participating in the Canadian negotiating strategy and draft agreement.

Canada – China Free Trade Agreement: Premiers welcome the Prime Minister’s commitment to explore a potential free trade agreement with China and are working to expand trade links with China. Premiers call on the Prime Minister to ensure that provinces and territories are active participants in the negotiating of any new trade arrangements.

Environmental Approvals: Premiers discussed environmental assessment in light of recent federal Expert Panel reports. Premiers called on the federal government to work with them to ensure that the environmental review processes respect the principle of “one-project, one assessment”, do not add unnecessary duplication or delays, continue to have access to expertise, and that any changes respect provincial and territorial jurisdiction, and existing co-management regimes.

Canadian Energy Strategy: Premiers discussed the ongoing implementation of the CES released July 2015. Last year, Premiers directed Ministers to continue collaborative work in four priority areas: energy efficiency, delivering energy to people, climate change and the transition to a lower carbon economy, and technology and innovation.

Adaptation: Premiers discussed the need for more coordinated planning, funding and innovation in order to adapt communities, regions, industry and governments to long term changes in weather, temperature and environmental conditions. Given the need to ensure climate change impacts are considered, especially in infrastructure, Premiers call on the federal government to clarify how the funding commitments made in the Budget 2017 will directly support provincial and territorial adaptation plans and actions. Premiers also called for improvements to Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements and need for strategic federal investment in resilient infrastructure.

Northern Communities: Premiers call on the federal government to be a stronger partner in supporting pre-emptive strategic infrastructure and should accelerate previous commitments to adaptation and accommodation in vulnerable northern communities.

Infrastructure: Premiers welcome the federal government’s commitment to new infrastructure funding which will support Canada’s economic growth. Premiers noted that federal funding should be in addition to the provincial-territorial investments in infrastructure.

Jobs/Skills Training: Premiers welcome the federal government’s commitment to new permanent, flexible labour market agreements. Premiers hope to quickly conclude

agreements with the federal government and will continue to work collaboratively with the federal government to foster and grow a highly-skilled workforce.

Cooperative Federalism: Premiers reiterated their strong desire to work collaboratively with the federal government towards shared objectives.

Criminal Justice: Premiers reviewed the implications of the *Jordan* decision on provincial and territorial justice systems, and discussed solutions to reduce court delays while respecting victims, public safety and the rights of the accused. Possible solutions include reforms to the use of preliminary inquiries, revisiting mandatory minimum sentences, and the importance of appointing more judges.

Cannabis: Cannabis legalization is a complex issue that requires a focused approach by provinces and territories. In response, Premiers established a Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Cannabis Legalization to identify common considerations and best practices to the legalization and regulation of cannabis. Premiers note that the administration, regulation, public education and law enforcement efforts needed to support legalization will incur significant costs for provincial and territorial governments. Premiers also noted the challenges with the federal government's proposed implementation date of July 2018.

Opioids: Premiers stressed the importance of intergovernmental cooperation to mitigate the urgent and evolving crisis and are strongly committed to using a harm reduction approach. They discussed best practices that provinces and territories are currently doing and encourage the federal government to undertake further concrete actions to improve public safety in Canada.

Pharmacare: Provinces and territories have been pioneering work to improve the affordability, accessibility and appropriate use of prescription drugs, including work by the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, which led to a \$1.28 billion a year combined savings. Premiers noted the discrepancies between the prices of prescription drugs sold in Canada versus other countries and will continue to work collaboratively to reduce drug prices in Canada. Premiers agreed to continue exploring opportunities to improve drug coverage for Canadians and call on the federal government to continue to collaborate with them on establishing a National Pharmacare Plan.

Nutrition North: Premiers recognize the need to reduce the high cost of food and improve food security in isolated northern communities. On an urgent basis, Premiers call on the federal government to increase the accountability and transparency of the program so that the subsidy directly reduces the costs of food for residents.

Refugees: Premiers discussed the successful settlement of all newcomers and call on the federal government to address the growing wait times for asylum claims.

National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Premiers have long supported the call for a National Inquiry and continue to support

Indigenous communities in their need to move forward with a family-centered approach that respects and honours victims and their loved ones. Premiers stressed the importance for the Inquiry to meet and engage with Indigenous peoples in all jurisdictions.

Next Steps:

Council of the Federation summer meeting – hosted by New Brunswick, in St, Andrews on July 18-20, 2018.

Attachments:

None

News release items were issues during the meeting and are available at:
www.canadapremiers.ca .