



Premiers Endorse Water Charter

WINNIPEG, August 6, 2010 - Premiers today endorsed the Council of the Federation Water Charter recognizing the collective obligation of Canadians and their governments to be responsible water stewards.

Water is a vital natural resource that is a necessity for all life on earth. Yet, Canada is ranked second highest among OECD countries for per capita water consumption.

Canadians can and must do better.

An adequate and safe water supply is critical for every community and provides for the health and welfare of its residents. Ensuring water quality in rural and remote areas is particularly important.

Water technologies and services represent a tremendous economic opportunity in a four hundred billion dollar global market. Premiers agreed to continue to support research, development, and adoption of innovative technologies to advance water conservation and quality.

Premiers directed their Ministers to use the Water Charter as a guide in their work.

Premiers challenged individual Canadians, businesses and governments to reduce water consumption; increase water efficiency; and protect our water quality.

As this past year has demonstrated, some Canadians have also been faced with too much water due to excessive runoff and excessive rain, while others have grappled with prospects of drought and water scarcity. Canadians in coastal communities are increasingly at risk of salt water intrusion into fresh water supplies due to rising sea levels and larger storm surges. Canadians also need to be better prepared to deal with diverse water-related events, particularly as our climate changes.

Environment

All Canadians have an important role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting the environment and adapting to the effects of climate change. Premiers reviewed the current state of international discussions on climate change and energy. They agreed to continue to closely monitor developments in the United States and with the United Nations and Copenhagen Accord. Premiers continue to work in their own jurisdictions to advance climate change initiatives and also encourage the federal government to partner with provinces and territories by strategically investing in programs that support climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Premiers are pleased to announce that an online community of practice on climate change adaptation was launched in July, which will be initially sponsored by the Council of the Federation. The online community will facilitate the sharing of knowledge among academics and experts across the country with the goal of assisting governments on climate change adaptation

and supporting all provinces and territories in their efforts to incorporate climate change adaptation into planning and policies.

Premiers expressed support for the wide range of initiatives already underway in provinces and territories and agreed that:

- Integrated Community Energy Systems (ICES) is an innovative approach that coordinates the planning of energy delivery across multiple sectors. Premiers look forward to seeing the results of ICES-related pilot projects in Canada and asked Energy Ministers to look at ways to incorporate green building policies, low-temperature geothermal, energy efficient housing measures under the ICES model.
- It is important that Canada's wetlands and boreal forest be protected. The boreal forest is one of the world's largest remaining intact forests, totaling 1.4 billion acres. Premiers called on businesses and communities to partner with us towards the UN goal of planting one tree for every person on the planet.
- Having just returned from the "Polar Bear Capital of the World" (Churchill, Manitoba), Premiers look forward to Ministers concluding their work with the federal government towards a National Polar Bear Conservation Strategy.

Environmental Assessment

It is essential that major infrastructure projects in our provinces and territories be reviewed through a comprehensive and scientifically sound environmental assessment process. However, billions of dollars in projects and thousands of jobs can be tied up by duplicative environmental assessment processes – without improving environmental protection.

Premiers welcomed the progress the federal government has made to enhance existing processes but agreed more work needs to be done. Premiers urge the federal government to agree to a one project-one assessment approach to reduce wasteful duplication and delays while ensuring the highest standards of environmental protection. An effective process lowers risks for all critical economic development projects.

The single environmental assessments in the Yukon and Nunavut and in the offshore areas of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia are examples of assessment processes that should be maintained.

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