

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

International Trade

Western Premiers discussed the importance of international trade and increasing market access in both existing and new markets to support Canada's continued prosperity. Premiers are committed to taking actions to improve western Canada's competitiveness and market access for western Canadian products and services.

Canada's competitors are quickly securing agreements with key trading partners, such as the China-Australia FTA, the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, and the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA. Asia continues to grow in importance to Western Canada. Western Premiers discussed the importance of Asia to Western Canada's economic prosperity and support continued efforts to expand market access in this region. International free trade agreements (FTAs) have the potential to substantially increase market access for Canadian goods and services. Premiers acknowledge federal efforts to secure ambitious FTAs such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and bilateral agreements with India and Japan and expressed their strong support for the creation of a Canada-China panel to actively explore the way to deepen bilateral trade and economic cooperation between our countries. Premiers are committed to working with the federal government to ensure international agreements are comprehensive and secure meaningful market access for our goods and services. Premiers also noted the importance of measures to support regional economic development and Aboriginal Peoples in trade agreements.

The United States (US) continues to be our largest and most significant trading partner. Premiers discussed a number of issues concerning Canada-US trade relations.

- Mandatory country-of-origin labelling (COOL), which imposes strict labelling requirements for Canadian cattle and hogs, has cost Canadian cattle and hog producers billions of dollars. Premiers welcomed the recent WTO Appellate Body's ruling against these requirements and called for the U.S Government to bring an end to COOL.
- The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) proposed fee changes will increase inspection fee costs by up to 205%. As a result, the trucking sector could face more than \$15 million in new fees.
- *Buy American* rules that exclude Canadian companies from government procurement projects at the federal, state, and local levels continue to appear in US legislation. Premiers remain committed to advocating against these measures, which can be detrimental to companies and job growth in both countries. *Buy American* requirements are also at odds with the intent of the bi-national "Beyond the Border" and Regulatory Cooperation Council initiatives, and Premiers urge the federal government to continue its efforts to address these restrictions.
- The Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA) is scheduled to expire on October 12, 2015. Premiers call for an extension of the SLA to prevent trade litigation and bring continued stability and predictability to the lumber industry.

Infrastructure

Western Premiers agreed there is a need to build on the successful infrastructure partnerships with the federal government so that Western provinces and territories have sufficient infrastructure to take full advantage of trade agreements and foster economic growth. Existing federal programs have not always been sufficient to meet Western Canada's trade infrastructure needs. Increased federal investment in gateways and strategic transportation corridors are needed to support greater international trade in key markets and improve access to natural resource development. Infrastructure deficits exist in metropolitan areas and along transportation corridors and are a barrier to future growth and market access. The infrastructure deficit in rural and remote communities in Western provinces and territories also requires specific attention.

Western Premiers are committed to working together, and with the federal government and the private sector, to ensure Western Canada's transportation system is efficient, effective and capable of meeting current and future demand growth.

Safe, reliable and competitive delivery of goods and services to and from key markets is essential to enhancing Canada's reputation as a trading nation and realizing the full benefits of growth in key markets, such as Asia. With more than 61% of Canada's total exports to Asia, Western Canada's ability to efficiently get goods to market is essential to Canada's continued prosperity.

Premiers also discussed domestic energy infrastructure issues such as upgrading and expanding electrical grids throughout the West and North, as well with eastern Canada and the United States.

Canada Transportation Act Review

Western Premiers discussed the federal government's review of the Canada Transportation Act (CTA). Premiers call on the federal government to ensure all Canadians and businesses have access to an effective, competitive and market-based transportation system, including:

- Improved capacity, efficiency, performance, reliability and safety of the transportation system.
- Enhanced access to competitive and reliable air, rail, marine, and road transportation for shippers and passengers, including in rural and remote regions.
- Liberalized Air Transport Agreements to enhance air access, create jobs and support economic growth.
- Increased federal investment in gateways and corridors to ensure market access for exports and enhanced safety of the transportation system.
- Greater federal role in developing the northern component of the national transportation system, recognizing the essential role transportation plays in economic development including recognizing the role of northern ports.

- Improved coordination within the supply chain across Western Canada, including better connectivity to gateway and corridor access points, such as marine ports, inland ports and inland border crossings.
- Better information sharing between Transport Canada's Commodity Supply Chain Table and western provinces and territories.
- Continued attention to Canada-US border issues recognizing the interconnectedness of the Canada-US supply chain.
- Expanded supply chain performance monitoring.
- Improved Canada Transportation Agency powers, including a greater role in monitoring the transportation system, public reporting on supply chain performance and an expedited dispute resolution process.

Internal Trade

Western Premiers reiterated their commitment to an ambitious internal trade agreement. Provinces and territories are actively working together to reduce trade barriers and modernize Canada's internal trade with negotiations on a new agreement to be concluded by March 2016. Premiers call on the federal government to take a similarly ambitious approach to identifying and reducing federal barriers to internal trade.

Premiers noted that under the current pan-Canadian *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)*, there are some 80 plus federal entities that are not identified as being covered by its free trade rules. It is also estimated that nearly half the value of all federal procurement has been excluded from the AIT requirements for open procurement and ensuring equal opportunity for all Canadian suppliers.

Labour Mobility

Western Premiers re-iterated their support for the work of Canada's Premiers to improve apprentice mobility. Once implemented, the apprenticeship mobility protocol will make it easier for apprentices to move between provinces and territories while completing their training and certification. This pan-Canadian approach to apprenticeship will strengthen skills training and, in turn, Canada's economic development.

Climate Change

Recognizing the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris on November 30 – December 11, 2015, and its importance to global action on climate change Western Premiers took the opportunity to share provincial and territorial experience with policy development and technology innovation in the efforts to address climate change.

Premiers agreed to support ongoing collaboration, including with the federal government, in developing Canada's strong approach to addressing climate change, leveraging the leadership among provincial and territorial governments in taking action on climate change, and noted the value of taking an integrated approach with the US.

Disaster Assistance and Mitigation

Western Premiers discussed the recently announced program changes to the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA). They agreed the federal government must continue to play a critical role in assisting communities recover from catastrophic events, such as floods and forest fires. Premiers expressed concern that the announced changes to DFAA will offload additional emergency support and recovery costs onto individuals and families, provinces, territories, and come at a time when the frequency of extreme weather related events is predicted to increase. Western Premiers urged the federal government to reconsider its decision. They believe Canadians want the federal government to maintain and strengthen the disaster assistance arrangements, not cut them back.

Western Premiers also discussed the recently announced details regarding the National Disaster Mitigation Program. While welcoming the program, they agreed that \$200 million over five years for the entire nation was not adequate to help meet major flood protection project needs in several provinces.

Aboriginal Children in Care

Premiers discussed the ongoing work of Canada's Premiers to address the disproportionate and large number of Aboriginal children in care across the country. They reiterated their commitment to engage with Aboriginal partners towards solutions.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Premiers discussed the need for coordinated action to prevent and end violence against Indigenous women and girls. Premiers also confirmed their commitment to a second National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to be held in 2016. Manitoba will also host an inaugural meeting for law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim services, to explore best practices and better coordinate and share information on policing and justice responses to these cases.

National Household Survey

Western Premiers discussed the upcoming 2016 Census and integration with the National Household Survey. Premiers agreed that information collected from these surveys serves as a critical foundation for informed policy making by governments and others – with significant impact on the lives of Canadians. Premiers discussed some of the concerns with the 2011 National Household Survey, including the exclusion of information from regions where the response rate was below 50%, and called on the federal government to ensure the process of collecting the information in 2016 is of the highest possible quality. Premiers expressed their governments' readiness to work with the federal government to actively promote the importance of participation in the National Household Survey in 2016.

2016 Western Premiers' Conference

Premier Clark will host next year's Western Premiers' Conference.