

***Report on Year One
Council of Atlantic Premiers'
Atlantic Action Plan for Regional Cooperation***

Introduction

In November 2001, the Council of Atlantic Premiers released *Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Cooperation*. The document represents a major commitment by the Council to advance the interests of Atlantic Canadians. A year after the adoption of the Action Plan, the Council is pleased to announce significant progress in improving services to its citizens and strengthening the economic competitiveness of the region.

Improving Services to the Citizens of Atlantic Canada

Education & Skills Development

➤ **Literacy**

Improving reading skills in schools remains a priority for Atlantic departments of education. Major steps were taken to improve reading literacy skills with the release of a number of resources.

Four French-language booklets

Mot de passe : litt ratie – Livret destin  aux parents;

Mot de passe : litt ratie – A Booklet Intended for Parents;

Mot de passe : litt ratie – Livret destin  aux directions d' cole; and

Mot de passe : litt ratie – Livret destin  au personnel enseignant

Four English-language brochures

How to Monitor Your Child's Reading Development;

How the Teacher Helps Your Child Learn to Read;

How You Can Help Your Child Learn To Read; and

How Your Child Develops as a Reader.

Two Reading Assessment Resources

Atlantic Canada Reading Assessment Resource Kit for grades K-3; and

Trousse d'appr ciation de rendement en lecture : immersion fran aise maternelle   la troisi me ann e

These resources put forward strategies and ideas that will assist school administrators, parents, and teachers create an environment favourable to the development of reading skills with a focus on children's early reading development. These regional projects build

on current provincial efforts, provide the opportunity to share expertise, and convey a strong and consistent message on the importance of early literacy.

In 2003, departments will continue to support reading literacy with the development of four additional French-language booklets/promotional products intended for community leaders, libraries, preschools and adolescents; a French-language interactive website on reading literacy; and grades 4 through 6 English-language resources.

➤ **Post-Secondary Education**

Atlantic premiers recognize the valuable resource that Atlantic Canadian post-secondary education (PSE) institutions represent to the region. Implicit in this recognition is an acknowledgment of the public expectation to ensure that educational post-secondary institutions are accessible to citizens, equipped to deliver state-of-the-art instruction, and responsive to new opportunities in the current economy.

Provinces have completed an initial assessment of what measures can be taken to make Atlantic Canada's PSE institutions truly responsive to our needs.

- ⇒ Departments of post-secondary education are working to develop a policy with regard to quality of training programs eligible for student loans.
- ⇒ Departments have completed a report on the infrastructure needs of our post-secondary institutions in order to identify potential funding options between institutions and the federal and provincial governments. Consultations among universities, community colleges and governments identified a need for \$679 million infrastructure renewal funding in order to modernize educational facilities and equipment in Atlantic Canada.

To increase the relevance of post-secondary education to society's needs, provinces are also collaborating on initiatives that will attempt to use labour market information to make strategic program funding decisions.

➤ **Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium**

The four ministers responsible for community colleges are committed to enhancing community college programming in the region by formalizing the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC). Through the APCCC, the four provinces and community colleges will collaborate in a number of strategic areas:

- ⇒ program development and delivery of community college courses and programs;
- ⇒ expansion of the transferability of credits throughout the region; and
- ⇒ professional development for community college faculty involved in developing and delivering on-line courses.

Health

➤ **Common Drug Review Process**

The Atlantic departments of health have established a unified drug review process within the region. Twenty-three drugs have been reviewed to date. The regional review process

has reduced duplication, maximized the use of limited resources and enhanced the consistency and quality of reviews.

Atlantic Canada is playing a leadership role in the drug review process in Canada as the regional process will serve as a template for the recently-established National Common Drug Review process.

➤ **Human Resource Planning**

Each of the Atlantic provinces has recently undertaken studies of their Health Human Resources (HHR) as part of regionally funded Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) initiatives. The Atlantic departments of health and post-secondary education are working together on a project proposal to build on this work and establish an information support base to enable informed decision-making regarding Atlantic health education planning. The information will also be used to inform policies and practices in the areas of recruitment, funding, and accountability for education/training of health disciplines. This proposed project would accumulate existing provincial data and project regional supply/demand; undertake gap analysis; and determine regional requirements for health education. It will provide a planning tool for estimating current and future requirements for selected health professions. The proposal will be submitted to HRDC early next year.

➤ **Health Infostructure Atlantic**

The departments of health have established Health Infostructure Atlantic (HIA) to collaborate on health information technology strategies and to share best practices. HIA was awarded \$12 million in funding from the Canadian Health Infostructure Partnerships Program. This funding was matched with an additional \$12 million in funding from the provinces. These funds were instrumental in establishing the following.

- ⇒ Common Client Registry in Prince Edward Island
- ⇒ Case Management application for the Children in Need Program in Newfoundland and Labrador
- ⇒ Case Management application for Single Entry Access to the Continuing Care Sector in Nova Scotia
- ⇒ Case Management application for the provincial Home Care Program in Prince Edward Island
- ⇒ Teleradiology/Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) implementations in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island with intra- and inter-provincial connections to support patient access to specialty referral and consultation
- ⇒ Common information and data standards to ensure that the systems being implemented with this funding are interoperable

HIA will continue to work together to identify and develop additional common opportunities for collaboration across Atlantic Canada and explore the potential to leverage this work with external funding.

Environment

➤ Atlantic Work Group on Pest Management Education and Training Standards

In July 2002, the Council of Atlantic Premiers awarded a contract to Atlantic Information Services of Fredericton to develop pesticide education and training materials for pesticide applicators throughout the region. This will provide pesticide applicators with a consistent approach to licensing and certification. These materials will be available in January 2003 and will ensure that both general pesticide and landscape applicators within Atlantic Canada meet or exceed the national standards. This initiative is a perfect example of the provinces' ongoing commitment to continuously improve the industry and meet public demands for increased environmental safety and human health protection.

➤ Petroleum Contamination Evaluation

The provincial departments of environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in May 2002 adopting the Risk Based Corrective Action (RBCA) to remedy petroleum contaminated sites in Atlantic Canada. Using RBCA, provinces have cleaned up over 120 sites in the Atlantic region. Provinces have had great success with this process by making more effective use of human and financial resources, while providing a high level of environmental protection.

Increased Economic Competitiveness

Harmonized Trucking Strategy

The Atlantic provinces participated in a study entitled *Harmonized Trucking Strategy for Atlantic Canada: Assessment of Potential*. The study identifies several areas where harmonization within the Atlantic provinces might improve the efficient and safe movement of goods to and from the Atlantic region.

The harmonized trucking strategy will contribute to increased trade corridor efficiency; improved capacity of regional and local transportation systems; and improved coordination among provincial agencies.

Significant milestones have been achieved within the region, contributing to the overall goal of a harmonized trucking strategy. The Atlantic provinces have harmonized weights and dimensions regulations for common configurations and work is proceeding on harmonization of procedures for the movement of oversize and overweight loads, and on common enforcement practices within the region. Preliminary discussions have also begun with the State of Maine to determine the feasibility of harmonizing vehicle weights and dimensions between the New England States and Atlantic Canada.

Atlantic Trade Corridor

The Atlantic Provinces Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Strategic Plan is complete. The plan is a result of collaboration among the Atlantic provinces, the federal government, and a broad range of stakeholders within the region. The strategic plan will

provide a coordinated approach to future ITS projects that are regional in scope, resulting in economies of scale and harmonization of technologies.

The ITS deployment plan for the region will outline several key project areas for further development and potential deployment that contribute to the evolution of an intelligent Atlantic trade corridor. These project areas also complement the work under the harmonized trucking strategy. Atlantic departments of transportation support work at the New Brunswick/Maine border to implement ITS border efficiency programs and are participating in national efforts to develop a Road Weather Information System (RWIS).

E-Government

The 1996 Atlantic Canada On-line (ACOL) agreement provides the framework for regional cooperation in on-line service delivery. The major accomplishments in on-line service delivery are an agreement to renew the 1996 ACOL agreement and the development of an on-line lien check to enhance the electronic Personal Property Registry (PPR) for Atlantic Canada. The PPR provides a common electronic registration process for personal property throughout Atlantic Canada and is recognized as a strong example of regional cooperation among the four governments in policy, technology and service delivery.

The PPR initiative enhances service delivery to businesses operating in each of the four provinces by providing them with a common electronic access point and reduce operating costs to government by sharing infrastructure costs.

Atlantic premiers strongly encourage the E-Government Committee to determine what additional opportunities in regional on-line services would provide value to the business community in order to enhance service delivery, realize cost savings, and create a more competitive business environment in the region.

Government Procurement

The Atlantic premiers exhibited their commitment to the reduction of barriers to trade by establishing the Atlantic Procurement Coordinating Committee (APCC) in 1994. The purpose of the committee is to assist in eliminating all forms of discrimination in public procurement by provincial governments and public entities within their jurisdictions.

Significant progress on the development of a set of Atlantic Standard Terms and Conditions has been achieved. The harmonized policies have the potential to establish common procurement practices in the Atlantic region, providing vendors with one set of rules for selling to government. The provinces will use the harmonized policies to create standard practices for the administration of requests for regional procurement.

Provinces, in their investigations into the establishment of an electronic Atlantic Vendor Registry, discovered that, given the rapid growth in electronic tendering of goods,

services, and construction tenders, regional suppliers already have the ability to view and bid on a great majority of tenders within the region, regardless of tender thresholds.

The establishment of an Atlantic Tender Network as a single entry point for access to public sector tender opportunities was explored. While a separate network was not formally established, provinces have created electronic links to the other Atlantic government procurement web sites. Suppliers now have access to all Atlantic tenders, which will provide easier, less costly, identification of tender opportunities within the region and increase Atlantic suppliers' participation in regional tender opportunities.

Premiers are committed to continuing to explore areas for joint bulk purchasing, to follow the success achieved in school bus and textbook purchasing.

Research and Innovation

The premiers recognize that research and innovation are vital contributors to the long-term economic competitiveness of the region and are committed to working collaboratively to build the region's capacity in these areas.

Provinces are committed to work with the federal government in strengthening the selection process related to the second round of the Atlantic Innovation Fund, increasing the funding available for grants through the Social Studies and Humanities Research Council, and refining criteria for the distribution of funds for indirect costs of university research (ICUR). The intent is to ensure that Atlantic post-secondary institutions receive an equitable share of federal research funding and maximize their potential to become recognized as research leaders on a national level. The provinces' emphasis is on delivering a strong message to the federal government prior to the development of the next federal budget.

Energy

The first Atlantic Energy Ministers' Forum was held in May 2002. The energy ministers are committed to develop an integrated approach, especially for federal/provincial discussions, and for discussions with the United States. Ministers endorsed a new Atlantic energy initiative and agreed to work together in a number of key areas, including:

- ⇒ clarification and harmonization of regulations;
- ⇒ collaboration with and among electric utilities; and
- ⇒ development of Atlantic strategies on energy efficiency.

The New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers launched a new initiative to synchronize energy-related regulations in the Northeast at their August meeting. This initiative will build on the work of the Atlantic Energy Ministers' forum.

A regional approach in the energy sector will work to secure our energy supplies, develop policies that benefit the region, encourage the development of new forms of energy, and enhance business development in Atlantic Canada.

New Regional Opportunities

In addition to the work described in this progress report, premiers are engaged in a continuing process to identify and analyze new cooperation initiatives in keeping with their commitment to explore new ideas and opportunities. In June 2002, the Council of Atlantic Premiers renewed its commitment to work on new fronts of government-to-government cooperation in a number of sectors.

Immigration

The Council of Atlantic Premiers will undertake a regional review of immigration with the aim of cooperating to increase recruitment and retention of immigrants in the region. Regional collaboration will lead to the identification of initiatives of common interest, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and assist the four provinces in speaking with one voice on national immigration issues. A work plan is currently being developed; as a first step, provinces are undertaking an "Atlantic Scan" comparing information on demographic trends and immigration within the region.

Air Access

The Council is also committed to improve air access by advancing options to the federal government that would create an environment intended to increase the level of air service available to Atlantic businesses and consumers. The goals are to foster a competitive environment that will permit the growth of regional air services and pursue opportunities for open sky agreements with Europe and continued liberalization with the United States.

Improving air access to, from, and within, Atlantic Canada will lead to an increase in economic opportunity and activity for rural communities, a reduction in cost and travel times through the establishment of additional direct connections to the Eastern US Seaboard and Europe, and improved intermodal connections for businesses and tourists.

Securities

Atlantic premiers agreed to renew their commitment to work collaboratively to promote small capital pool development. The securities regulators of the four provinces will work to harmonize exemptions from prospectus requirements and provide greater flexibility for business in approaching investors throughout the region, while maintaining meaningful investor protection.

Premiers are also committed to explore the establishment of junior capital pools within the region by harmonizing policies and legislation, and addressing issues that may arise with respect to compliance. Regional junior capital pools would allow businesses to seek financing from a regional pool of investors, without having to face different requirements in each province.

Conclusion

The Report on Year One represents the first substantive report to Atlantic Canadians on achievements and progress related to Action Plan commitments as set forth by premiers. Regional cooperation in the delivery of services and increased competitiveness within the region will continue to enhance the interest of Atlantic Canadians, build a stronger regional economy and meet the needs of the people of the region.