



## **Premiers support national disaster mitigation funding program**

**VANCOUVER, July 22, 2011** -- Premiers began their final day of meetings by discussing the natural disasters that Canada has experienced recently. Premiers also discussed the upcoming *Investment Canada Act* Review; the importance of citizens' engagement, and announced a new online initiative to enhance the sharing of information on water quality and conservation.

### **Disaster Management**

Severe natural disasters have significantly affected the lives and livelihoods of many families across Canada, including those who have experienced unprecedented flooding and have been devastated by wildfires. Premiers discussed ongoing disaster prevention and relief efforts within their provinces and territories, noting that work related to recent flooding and forest fires is far from over. The federal government has been an important partner in the flood fight and in dealing with the effects on communities from wildfires, by providing strong support when needed. In particular, Premiers thanked the military for their assistance to affected communities.

Provinces and territories have gone to great lengths to prepare for these exceptional situations and previous provincial and territorial investments in mitigation efforts and disaster management have proven extremely valuable for protecting property and reducing damages. Premiers welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to develop a new long-term national disaster mitigation funding program that examines both infrastructure-related and other mitigation strategies. Premiers direct ministers to work with the federal government to develop this program by fall 2011 and ensure it covers the range of events such as earthquakes, fires, floods, storms and marine disasters.

Several First Nations communities also continue to experience flooding on a regular basis and are among the most vulnerable communities. Given the federal government's responsibility for emergency management and response for First Nations communities, Premiers encourage the federal government to develop a long-term mitigation strategy, reflecting the interests of First Nations and the role provincial and territorial emergency management officials play in providing services on behalf of the federal government, to protect First Nations communities against severe and continued flooding. This strategy should also address northern and Aboriginal communities experiencing major impacts on critical infrastructure as a result of changes to permafrost caused by climate change.

Disaster management issues will be discussed this fall in Manitoba at a national meeting of all key agencies involved in disaster management. Provinces and Territories will review the flood and forest fire outlook for 2012 and identify areas where improved coordination may be possible. Premiers encouraged the federal government to participate fully in this meeting.

Premiers also discussed the impact flooding has had on the agricultural sector and the rural economy. Flooding has significantly affected seeding in agricultural land in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. Cattle producers may also have to reduce their herds because of pasture damage and inadequate forage. Premiers directed their Ministers of Agriculture to work together and with their federal counterpart to prepare specific proposals for joint support programs to address these urgent concerns.

### **Investment Canada Act Review**

Premiers discussed the importance of ensuring the continued inflow of foreign direct investment to Canada and the jobs and economic growth these investments create. Premiers noted that many of Canada's unique and strategically valuable assets fall within their jurisdiction. As part of their development, Canadian and foreign investments have helped to responsibly build these industries for the benefit of our citizens and our economies, consistent with Canadian rules and values.

Premiers welcome the federal government's commitment to proceed with a review of the *Investment Canada Act*. They noted the importance of transparent, timely and stable rules to evaluate responsible foreign investments in Canada. Premiers agreed on the priority of ensuring that commitments made by foreign investors through the review process are effectively enforced. They also agreed on the importance of public dialogue on proposed foreign investments. Provincial and territorial participation in determining what constitutes a net benefit to Canada is essential. Premiers look forward to working with the federal government to review the Act and in particular provide input on how to define what constitutes a strategic asset.

### **Citizens' Engagement**

Premiers welcome the interest of citizens in helping to address problems that affect their lives and note that the increased use of social media is creating new and innovative ways for citizens, especially youth, to engage with political leaders and candidates. Premiers recognize that if processes for engaging citizens are to be meaningful they must be transparent, inclusive and conducted in a manner which provides the opportunity to work through conflicting values and ideas together. Effective engagement is vital in meeting the challenges faced by all jurisdictions and results in decisions that better reflect public values and leads to innovative and collaborative solutions.

One of the best ways to shape the way decisions are made is to engage in the democratic process. Premiers urge Canadians to fully utilize these opportunities, including by voting in federal, provincial, territorial and local elections.

### **Water Information Sharing Initiative**

Last year, Premiers committed as part of the Water Charter to cooperate and share information on water conservation and water quality. Consistent with that commitment, Premiers are pleased to announce that the Council of Federation Water Stewardship Council is embarking on an online initiative to enhance the cooperation and sharing of information on water at the national level. Building on the momentum of the technology

age and more open government, Canada's Water InfoStream is an online listing of major provincial, territorial and federal government water resources. The online catalogue will act as a communications tool to help spread the word to researchers, policy makers, and the public at large about water data and information relevant to their interests and needs, both locally and nationally. The catalogue can be found at [www.councilofthefederation.ca/infostream.html](http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/infostream.html).

- 30 -

**For more information:**

**Nina Chiarelli**

Government of British Columbia

250-387-0793

Cell: 250-216-8426

[nina.chiarelli@gov.bc.ca](mailto:nina.chiarelli@gov.bc.ca)