

FOR RELEASE
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Territorial premiers announce key outcomes from Northern Premiers' Forum

Joint news release

OLD CROW—As a result of their strong working relationship, Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski, Northwest Territories Premier Robert R. McLeod and Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna today announced the release of a pan-territorial approach to science.

The Pan-Northern Approach to Science sets a path forward for northern science that commits to utilizing sound, reliable and evidence-based information to make decisions; developing northern science capacity; enhancing science communications and outreach; promoting strong science policies; and encouraging meaningful partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, the private sector and the science community.

"In encouraging innovative, community-based research that combines traditional knowledge and modern scientific techniques, the Pan-Northern Approach to Science recognizes that boosting scientific capacity in the territories will in turn support social and economic prosperity in the North," Pasloski said. "The release of the science approach delivers on a key commitment from our last meeting of northern premiers. I look forward to continuing to work with Premier McLeod and Premier Taptuna to present a strong, collective voice for Canada's North."

The premiers also committed to working together to strengthen engagement with the federal government to ensure long-term, stable, and predictable federal funding for the territories and to renew Canada's Arctic policies and strategies.

"The Canadians who are most aware of northern issues are those that live in northern Canada," McLeod said. "Engaging residents of the territories in all phases of research also harnesses the power of insights held by local and traditional knowledge. We welcome further collaboration with our government institutions and our communities as we strive to address both emerging and well-recognized issues."

The territories also reaffirmed their position on a carbon tax as well as joint commitment to mitigate and adapt to climate change to ensure responsible and sustainable development of northern communities.

"The Northern Premiers' Forum is a unique opportunity to direct attention to issues and priorities that affect the North," Taptuna said. "This year, we renewed our commitment to addressing topics such as scientific capacity, climate change, and infrastructure development in the North. As always, we stand united in promoting growth and economic prosperity for our great region."

Over the course of the two-day forum, premiers also discussed infrastructure, health, tourism marketing, search and rescue, housing, climate change science and federal funding arrangements.

Learn more

The Pan-Northern Approach to Science

-30-

See communiqué below.

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Communiqué: Northern premiers commit to continued collaboration on shared priorities

Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski, Northwest Territories Premier Robert R. McLeod and Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna met today in Old Crow, Yukon, to discuss priority areas and opportunities to cooperate in growing the economy, creating jobs and building a stronger North.

Northern premiers recognised the unique circumstances of the territories in the areas of health, tourism marketing, search and rescue, housing, climate change, science and federal funding arrangements.

Premiers discussed the Government of Canada's new engagement approach, and noted recent developments in the areas of territorial financing; climate change, including COP 21 in Paris and the Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change; as well as Arctic leadership. The premiers also agreed that federal programs, including funding and regulatory regimes, need to recognise the territories' relatively low population density and remote communities.

Premiers discussed a range of priorities and areas of collaboration under the following themes:

Health

- Premiers noted the upcoming negotiations with the federal government on a new health funding arrangement, and discussed the need for continued federal recognition through territorial health funding of the North's unique circumstances, including the high cost to cover medical travel, innovative medical practices and health care services in small, remote communities.

Housing

- Premiers recognised that good-quality affordable housing is key to healthy communities and a healthy population. Premiers reaffirmed their commitment to the Pan-Territorial Approach to Housing and discussed the need for federal support for long-term, sustainable and adequate housing. They also expressed concern about the continued decrease in O&M funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which will see an eventual decline to zero by 2038.

Pan-Northern Approach to Science

- Premiers released the Pan-Northern Approach to Science to recognise the importance of practicing science in the territories in a way that broadens understanding of the North, uses both traditional knowledge and modern science as well as enhances northerners' knowledge and ability to operate in a changing and fragile environment.

Federal funding

- Premiers discussed the higher cost of delivering services in the North and affirmed the necessity of stable, predictable funding as key principles of the Territorial Formula Financing (TFF). Premiers also affirmed the need for the federal government to recognise that the territories face higher building costs because of climatic conditions, greater distances, and lack of basic infrastructure. Also, the timelines associated with any new programs are going to have to work within the constraints of short building seasons.
- Funding programs in the North must recognize that strict per capita funding does not work and that a base-plus funding model is essential. Furthermore cost-sharing should be minimized in recognition of our small economies.

Tourism marketing

- Premiers acknowledged the successes of the Look Up North and the Canada's North – A Story to be Told tourism marketing campaigns, launched through the territories' Pan-North Tourism Marketing Consortium. Premiers recognise and appreciate the significant investments by the federal government in tourism-related projects across the North under its Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development (SINED) contribution program.
- Premiers look forward to new tourism initiatives such as product expansion, cultural tourism and new market research and they intend to approach the federal government for funding support for pan-northern tourism initiatives.

Canada's Arctic Agenda

- Premiers acknowledged the Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership signed in Washington by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Barack Obama on March 10, 2016, which includes a commitment to, "a shared Arctic leadership model." Premiers welcome Prime Minister Trudeau's commitment to renewing Canada's Arctic policies and strategies. Territorial Premiers look forward to engaging the federal government on an appropriate process. A Northern Vision, released by Premiers in 2014, articulates the shared priorities of the territories and our shared vision for self-determination and a prosperous, healthy and sustainable north.

Climate Change

- Premiers discussed the effects of climate change in the North, noting that dramatic impacts are already occurring requiring adaptation measures that increase the cost of living. Premiers affirmed their commitment to work together to advance their common climate change priorities, and to work with their federal and provincial counterparts in the development of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.
- Premiers discussed climate change efforts already underway in the territories including those contained in the Pan-Territorial Adaptation Strategy. They also confirmed the territories are actively participating on the working groups of the pan-Canadian framework to ensure the realities of climate change faced in the territories is understood and reflected in the development of this important framework.
- Premiers noted again that the implementation of a carbon tax would have a negative impact on the quality of life in the North. Canada's climate change goals must be conducted in a way that does not negatively impact northern costs of living, undermine food security or threaten emerging economies.

Nutrition North

- Premiers welcomed the federal budget announcement regarding the Nutrition North program. Premiers are still concerned the program does not meet key objectives and urge the federal government to ensure Nutrition North assists northerners in lowering their cost of living, addresses food security and provides better access to healthy foods. Premiers encourage the federal government to demonstrate transparency in implementing the program, with a focus on ensuring the public has the information it needs to understand how the program works, where the subsidy goes, and how it affects food prices for consumers.

Transportation Infrastructure

- Federal investment in transportation infrastructure is critical to addressing the infrastructure deficit in northern Canada and unlocking the full economic potential of all three territories to the benefit of Northerners and all Canadians.
- Premiers welcomed the recent release of the final report of the Canada Transportation Act review and its significant recommendations for improving northern transportation infrastructure. Premiers agreed to collaborate across the three territories and to work with the federal government to encourage the implementation of these recommendations.

Northern Search and Rescue

- Premiers reiterated the need for a consistent, coordinated search and rescue regime in the North. The clear reality of northern search and rescue is that the territories have harsh environments, vast distances and limited capacity. This is especially true when it comes to search and rescue by air where the nearest points of departure for aircraft are many hours away. Premiers called upon the federal government to recognize that northern bases would help reduce response times, and encouraged increased federal support for search and rescue in the North.

2017 Northern Premiers' Forum

Premier Robert R. McLeod confirmed that the Northwest Territories will host next year's Northern Premiers' Forum.

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