

**Northern Development Ministers' Forum
Chibougamau, Quebec - October 27-29, 2004**

**MINISTERS BRING NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT TO THE ATTENTION
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION**

Chibougamau (Québec), October 29, 2004 - Ms Nathalie Normandeau, Minister for Québec Regional Development and Tourism and Chair of the 2004 Forum, concluded a meeting in Chibougamau in Nord-du-Québec that brought together, from across Canada, Ministers responsible for Northern Development.

Over the past two days, the Ministers covered various key issues for northern development, including updating the Forum's Three-year Action Plan 2004-2006, recruitment and retention in the North, investing in transportation infrastructure, and fostering northern innovation, as well as this year's theme, Ways to maximize economic and social impacts from major projects for northern communities.

A highlight of the 2004 Forum was the approval of *Focus North*, a northern information package, aimed at raising decision-maker and public awareness of the importance of Canada's northern regions.

Ministers expressed satisfaction with the work completed at the Forum. Their discussions helped cement their desire to work together to implement, respectively, actions required to develop the full potential of northern regions and promote the interests of northern residents.

"However a lot more effort is needed to achieve our goals most notably to meet the infrastructure transportation needs and telecommunications challenges and to inform the public as to the benefits that results from investing in the North" stated Minister Normandeau.

The northern Ministers provided support for territorial government leadership and to government-to-government dialogue on priorities and projects to advance the economic potential of their respective jurisdictions. In particular, the Ministers supported the territorial Ministers in their request for commencement of bi-lateral negotiations of the Northern Economic Development funding announced in the last federal budget, with the entire \$90 million to be built into a delivery framework to commence in April 2005.

Ministers in attendance expressed disappointment that the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs was unable to attend the Forum and agree to write to Minister Scott to inform him of their discussions and commitments. Participants look forward to the Minister reaffirming his commitment to their common vision for northern development and elaborating on the recently announced Northern Strategy. Northern Ministers attending the forum agreed to work together between and among member jurisdictions in the development of a northern vision or strategy for every northern region in Canada.

The Ministers committed to sending a letter to the Chair of the Council of the Federation requesting that northern development be addressed at future meetings of the Council. They also decided to write to the Prime Minister to emphasize the need for flexibility in addressing the different needs of the provinces and territories.

The next Northern Development Ministers Forum will be held in September 2005 at Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba. "Next year, discussions will focus on education, training, and employment. We are excited to host the 2005 Forum and convinced it will be an opportunity to continue the work and discussions begun this year to maximize development in northern areas," stated Mr. Oscar Lathlin, Manitoba's Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Observations by Ministers in attendance

Mr. Pierre Corbeil, Minister for Forests, Wildlife, and Parks and Minister responsible for the Nord-du-Québec region, reaffirmed his government's interest in promoting natural resource development in northern regions. "Northern Québec's socioeconomic development depends largely on these resources. Discussions and work at the Forum confirm that profitable partnerships will continue to be established with both the regions and native communities in order to improve the conditions and quality of life of these people."

Ontario Northern Development and Mines Minister Rick Bartolucci said, "I have found the collaboration at the Northern Development Ministers Forum to be productive and useful. By sharing ideas and working together, I believe we can bring about the community and economic development needed to make our respective northern regions prosperous."

Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Oscar Lathlin added, "Northern Development Ministers across the country are working to learn from each other and utilize best practices from each region. Developing the potential of Northern Canada benefits everyone. For Manitoba this is a very high priority as highlighted by our Northern Development Strategy which lays out a plan and provincial priorities of improved housing, healthcare, transportation, education and economic development in our Northern communities."

"Northern British Columbia is an integral part of this province's economy," said the Chair of the Northern Caucus and Member of the Legislative Assembly, Bill Belsey. "That's why we are moving forward with initiatives to increase expansion of oil and gas development, and improve transportation infrastructure and high-speed telecommunications in our northern communities. By working in partnership with all levels of government, we can help our northern communities capitalize on new opportunities that support economic development and create jobs."

"As the new Minister responsible for Labrador Affairs, I am looking forward to meeting my counterparts from other jurisdictions throughout the country and having the opportunity to share information and discuss northern development opportunities," said Newfoundland and Labrador's Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, the Honourable Trevor Taylor. "The Northern Development Ministers' Forum has been very successful in its priority projects, to date, and I look forward to advocating the Northern Agenda into the future."

The Honourable Jim Kenyon responsible for Economic Development Yukon, "Since the goal of this forum is to advance the positions of the north in relation to national priorities, it is fitting that this forum give voice to the crucial role of northern governments and northern people in affirming their own vision for the north."

Nunavut Minister of Economic Development and Transportations The Honourable David Simailak said, "I am pleased to receive the unequivocal support of my colleagues regarding territorial decision making and made-in-the-north solutions that advance the economic potential and development of the three territories."

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