



September 21, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministers of Education and Training Pursue Discussions on Key Strategic Opportunities

(Charlottetown, PEI) – Atlantic ministers of education and training today discussed improving outcomes in education and skills training, and facilitating a successful transition of high school graduates to post-secondary studies. These were the major themes emerging from the meeting of the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), held in Charlottetown, PEI, attended by Hon. Martine Coulombe, New Brunswick Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Hon. Jody Carr, New Brunswick Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development; Hon. Joan Burke, Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Advanced Education and Skills; Hon. Marilyn More, Nova Scotia Minister of Labour and Advanced Education; Hon. Ramona Jennex, Nova Scotia Minister of Education; Hon. J. Alan McIsaac, Prince Edward Island Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development; and Hon. Allen F. Roach, Prince Edward Island Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Ministers of education and training recognize that this regional dialogue is extremely helpful for provinces to, individually or collectively, gain a better understanding and address the major challenges facing their respective public and post-secondary education systems. The ministers recognize the vital role of this regional forum to discuss skills and competencies required to fulfill opportunities emanating from proposed mega-projects in Atlantic Canada. Ministers want to position their respective education systems so that they can meet skilled labour needs, contribute to strengthening the region's economy, and benefit from key opportunities that lie ahead for the Atlantic region.

To assist the ministers in better understanding these emerging challenges, Dr. Michael Haan, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Population and Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick, and Dr. Tim O'Neill, Founder & President of O'Neill Strategic Economics, made thought-provoking presentations to the ministers. Dr. Haan provided an overview of demographic trends in the Atlantic region, which confirmed that the region has a low birth rate, an aging population, and a high rate of out-migration. Dr. Haan also offered some perspectives on how these challenges impact our education systems.

Dr. O'Neill, a leading Canadian economist, shared his views on the region's education systems and what will be needed in the future, with a focus on the skills and competencies Atlantic Canada will require to meet local labour market needs and to be competitive with the rest of Canada and the world.

Ministers of education and training noted, with interest, the recent Council of Atlantic Premiers' (CAP) announcement to establish an Atlantic Workforce Partnership (AWP). The objective of the AWP is to assist provinces in preparing for changing skill requirements and meet the anticipated demand associated with capital projects in mining, electricity, and shipbuilding sectors. Ministers recognize that this partnership will strengthen the region's labour force through targeted skills development and enhancement of apprenticeship opportunities.

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training also discussed the transition of students from public to post-secondary education institutions. Ministers are increasingly concerned that too many public school graduates do not pursue studies beyond high school and/or delay their post-secondary education for an extended period of time. Ministers were presented with statistics and trends, as well as barriers that impede or delay students from pursuing post-secondary education studies.

Moving forward, ministers agreed to further explore specific short- and long-term targeted initiatives, and directed officials to report back on strategies that can be undertaken provincially or regionally to promote a smooth transition of high school graduates to post-secondary education.

Discussions on future strategic opportunities in education and full participation in post-secondary education will build on the past successful collaboration between ministers of education and training in Atlantic Canada. Through regional cooperation, ministers have achieved substantial savings, developed high-quality curricula and resources, and undertaken successful promotion campaigns in adult literacy.

CAMET is an agency of the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP), and its purpose is to enhance cooperation in public (Entry-12) and post-secondary education in Atlantic Canada by working together to improve learning, optimize efficiencies and bring added value to provincial initiatives.

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