



Noteworthy

Atlantic Premiers adopt Premier Grimes' proposal

Premier Roger Grimes says he is pleased the Council of Atlantic Premiers have reached a consensus on a proposal he put forward on improving federal-provincial relations when the Premiers met in PEI this week.

This week, Premier Grimes put forward a Code of Conduct which outlines a set of principles of cooperation to strengthen and renew the Canadian federation.

“As a result of the cross country discussions I have had with premiers in recent weeks, I proposed a new Code of Conduct that will ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of government relationships within Canada,” said Premier Grimes. “There is already a broad consensus among premiers that action needs to be taken to improve the state of federal-provincial relations, and the time to take that action is now.” The Atlantic Premiers have agreed to bring their proposal to all premiers at the Annual Premiers Conference on July 9-11.

The Premiers also agreed to look at ways to reduce auto insurance premiums through regional co-operation. A recent Statistics Canada cost-of-living survey for the year ending February 2003 found that insurance costs had grown by over 50 per cent in all four Atlantic Provinces.

“The generic notion is that maybe the marketplace is so small in Atlantic Canada, with less than three million people all told, that if we can do something on a common basis for the whole region it might help drive costs down for consumers,” said Premier Grimes. ¶

Joint funding for broadband access to rural and remote schools and communities

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada have committed to a \$15-million initiative to expand high-speed broadband Internet access to rural and remote schools and communities in the province. Premier Roger Grimes and Federal Industry Minister Allan Rock, made the announcement June 20.

Premier Grimes said, “In particular, we are committed to ensuring equal educational opportunity for our young people, whether they live in a large urban centre or a small rural community. Strategic investments in leading edge telecommunications infrastructure, such as high speed broadband Internet, allows us to strengthen our distance education delivery system throughout the province.”

Education Minister Gerry Reid also participated in the announcement. “In Newfoundland and Labrador, approximately two-thirds of our schools are located in rural communities,” he said, adding that the funding is for the “benefit of our children and rural communities.” Each level of government will contribute \$5 million towards this initiative. ¶

Government succeeding in increasing offshore benefits

Mines and Energy Minister Walter Noel says government has worked very hard to ensure our province receives maximum benefits from the White Rose project. “We negotiated an agreement with Husky Energy which will see over 80 per cent of topsides engineering, fabrication and integration work take place in this province. This translates into approximately 2.8 million person hours of work.

“In addition to this, a contract was recently awarded to Bull Arm creating a further 130,000 person hours of employment. Companies in this province are also winning

contracts related to other aspects of the White Rose project that are above and beyond the topsides work commitments. June 18, a contract was awarded to Newdock in St. John’s to complete subsea work. This contract is outside of Husky Energy’s 80 per cent commitment for topsides work and will create up to 100 jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians over the next year.

“As the numbers currently reflect, including the contracts that have been awarded outside the province, less than 500,000 person hours will be completed at other fabrication yards across Canada.” ¶

Gazetting opens access to Laurentian Sub-basin

This week the federal government gazetted regulations governing the Laurentian Sub-basin. This step finalizes the decision taken by a tribunal more than a year ago to award 70 per cent of the basin to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gazetting of the regulations means that exploration can move forward. The area is estimated to have 600 to 700 million barrels of oil and eight to nine trillion cubic feet of natural gas. ¶

