

**Premier Gordon Campbell**  
**2001 Annual Premiers Conference**  
**Concluding Remarks**  
**August 3, 2001**

The consensus we have reached on a broad range of issues over the past couple of days is truly encouraging, and speaks well for our ability to lead the country in the provision of services to the people that we are elected to serve.

On issue after issue, the Premiers in their discussions showed we have much in common and that we are determined to work together to help resolve and tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Yesterday, we circulated a communiqué with regard to energy. We see energy as an important issue that is on the national agenda. We have asked for a formal agreement between the federal government and the provinces to make sure that all Canadians benefit from the energy resources that we have – and that we put Canada's interests first as we develop an international and intercontinental energy policy.

Yesterday's agreement with regard to health care funding and management not only asks the federal government to become a more complete partner in providing health services, but also assumes responsibility at the provincial level for the provision of those services. We have assumed and accept the responsibility to properly manage our health care system, and to look for areas where we can more effectively provide services to the people of our provinces and of our country.

There will be a special meeting of Premiers scheduled for mid-January. It will ensure that all provinces and territories put their ideas and strategies on the table to the Romanow Commission – to make sure we look at not just how we can restructure, but also how we can provide a health care system that is sustainable in the long term for the people of our country.

Yesterday we made a deliberate choice that we intend to lead the discussion with regard to health care. We have the responsibility to make sure that our patients are cared for properly. We are going to learn from one another in a number of areas of specific interest to the provinces and to the people who live there.

Premier Harris has been asked to report back on the commercial use of the human genome, and will be providing all of us with a formal, written report on that critical issue this fall.

Health care is only one of many issues that affect the people who live in our country and that we service in our provinces. Over the last two days, we have also discussed the need for the improvement of our infrastructure. Our transportation and our water infrastructure are clearly in need of repair.

One point became clear in our conversations: an equitable approach to infrastructure development and planning must recognize that the per capita funding formula which has been in place in the past does not provide for the needs of northern and remote communities in our country. It's important that we create that focus, to provide for a more comprehensive infrastructure approach as we move towards next year's Annual Premiers' Conference in Nova Scotia.

Similarly, we discussed the issues that are facing farm families and our agriculture industry across all provincial jurisdictions. The difficulties that farm families are facing have been highlighted and recognized. We also recognize that those are substantially increased by unfair international subsidies. The Premiers are calling on the federal government to aggressively pursue the elimination of international export subsidies. Premier Calvert has been asked and has agreed to take a lead role in working on this issue, and will report back to all of the Premiers by the end of September.

The Premiers discussed the needs of our post-secondary education and skills training institutions. We will be directing our ministers who are responsible for post-secondary education to report back with issue papers by December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. Those papers should highlight the challenges that we face and recommend concrete steps that we intend to take to be sure that post-secondary education and skills training programs give our citizens the tools and skills they need to participate actively, fully and productively in the new economic opportunities that lie ahead.

The Premiers also had discussions on the issue of early childhood development, and measures that the provinces are taking to enhance programs in that area. The Premiers noted that the federal contribution to early childhood development programs has been significant, and a step in the right direction. However, the provinces have agreed that they are going to continue to pursue a common child protection agenda.

That agenda will include the development of a national sex offender registry for those provinces that wish to implement such registries. There is already a registry in Ontario. British Columbia is about to embark on implementing one. Alberta is pursuing that. We will work together as provinces in co-ordinating that approach, in the hopes that we can involve the federal government so that we indeed have a program that works for any province that wishes to take advantage of it.

We have also called for amendments to the federal *Criminal Code* to make Internet luring a criminal offence. We will be providing for best practices by provinces, territories and the federal government, to stop the kind of Internet luring that is taking place and causing serious problems for children in our country.

We will continue to pursue appropriate actions to protect children who are involved in prostitution. Again, we believe it is important that we have a co-ordinated response to make sure that we hold people responsible for their actions.

Significantly, the Premiers have committed to pass in their provincial jurisdictions reciprocal family maintenance enforcement legislation. We have committed to one another that we will have that legislation passed and in place by next year's Premier's Conference in Nova Scotia.

Finally, we agreed to call upon the federal government to follow up on its commitment from last September for the establishment of a dispute resolution mechanism under the *Canada Health Act*. I will be writing to the Prime Minister to formally reinforce our request that he follow through on the commitment that was made to Premiers in September 2000. To date, no action has been taken on that. We expect the federal government to come forward with a workable, rational dispute mechanism process and to work with us to have that established in good faith as soon as possible.

In summary, the last two days have given all of the Premiers an opportunity to share the concerns that they face in their provinces. They are concerns of vital importance to all Canadians.

We have focused a great deal of attention on our health care system, and its sustainability. I think every Canadian should understand that if we are not willing to act together as Premiers, and if the federal government is not willing to act in a more complete partnership with the provincial governments, our health care system is not sustainable. It is going to be important that we work together and remember that Canadians' first request is a health care system that is there for them when they need it and where they live.

As chair of the forum, I can tell you that we have all agreed to hold ourselves mutually to account for the undertakings that we have made. We have an enormous opportunity to create a positive environment for change in the country, so that people get the services they need in the provinces where they are living. We have each learned a great deal from one another and I would like to thank the Premiers for the contribution and the constructive way that they engaged in the discussions and the debates that we had.

We look forward to working together. We will come together in January with regard to how we can better manage our health care system and we are all looking forward to next year's Annual Premier's Conference in Nova Scotia.