

Ontario and Québec build foundation for a stronger central Canadian economic region

Premiers McGuinty And Charest Hold First-Ever Joint Meeting Of Ontario And Quebec Cabinets

Québec City, June 2, 2008 – Emerging from the first-ever joint meeting of their Cabinets, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Quebec Premier Jean Charest today announced new progress made by their two provinces toward creating a regional partnership in central Canada to strengthen their economies and cooperate on key issues like climate change, energy and transportation.

"Ontario and Quebec are working together to build a prosperous regional economy that will attract business, workers and investment from around the world," said Premier McGuinty. *"Our goal is to create a common economic space in central Canada that will allow companies in Quebec and Ontario to compete and prosper in the global economy."*

"Progress made today on a number of priority areas for our two governments build on an already impressive record of achievements made since the signature of the Quebec-Ontario protocol for cooperation in June 2006," said Premier Charest. *"It also demonstrates the extent and the strength of our collective commitment to cooperate to improve services for our citizens."*

The Premiers made their comments at the conclusion of the first-ever joint meeting of the Ontario and Quebec Cabinets. Thirty ministers from the two provinces met in Quebec City to discuss common issues and sign agreements.

Ontario and Quebec represent Canada's two largest economies and together are home to almost two thirds of all Canadians. Together, both provinces are responsible for approximately 58 percent of Canada's total GDP, and for more than 55 percent of inter-provincial exports.

Premiers released the framework for the Ontario-Quebec Economic Partnership Agreement developed by the lead provincial negotiators. The framework will help guide negotiations as the two Provinces work to create a common economic space in central Canada and make it easier to do business and work in the region. Premiers also signed a joint declaration for a closer economic relationship between Canada and the European Union. *"To achieve such a partnership, we would like to see the beginning of negotiations at the next Canada- EU summit. This is also vital for the well-being of our citizens and the competitiveness of our businesses"*, said Premier Charest.

Agreements signed at the joint Cabinet meeting included a memorandum of understanding on a regional “cap and trade” system that will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change. The cap and trade system would be based on absolute reductions in emissions and be compatible with systems emerging in North America and the world.

As well, a memorandum of understanding covering cooperation on energy, and cooperation protocols on social services and youth were also signed by the two provinces.

The Cabinets also discussed work on the Continental Gateway and Trade Corridor and how a high-speed train within the Québec City-Windsor trade corridor could strengthen the economy and improve the environment.

“The progress we made today will help our people, our provinces and the rest of Canada” said Premier McGuinty. *“This was a historic event. But it was more than that – we had real work to do and today’s meeting will deliver real results, strengthen our regional economy and fight climate change.”*