

Transportation and Highway Safety Ministers take action to enhance road safety and boost Canada's competitiveness

February 14, 2020, Toronto – Today, Canada's Minister of Transport, the Honourable Marc Garneau, and the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure for Saskatchewan, the Honourable Greg Ottenbreit, co-chaired the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety.

Earlier today, in a separate session, Ministers met with Indigenous leaders to pursue their ongoing dialogue on transportation issues of shared interest, including safety and security, infrastructure and economic development.

Transportation and the Economy

Recognizing that an efficient and reliable railway system for commuting, and moving Canadians and goods to market is key to Canada's economy, Ministers expressed their concerns about the blockades across Canada, and reinforced the necessity of respecting judicial processes and the Orders of our courts. They agreed to make reliable railway transportation a priority. Ministers remain committed to renewed relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Ministers recognize that Canada's competitiveness relies heavily on how well the transportation system moves freight and people and facilitates internal and international trade. Its success depends on the coordinated strategic actions and efforts of federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Today, Ministers are launching the Pan-Canadian Competitive Trade Corridor Initiative to identify areas of collaboration which will lead to further job creation and economic growth. The goal of this Initiative is to strengthen the reliability and efficiency of the transportation system in Canada, improve our ability to reach domestic and international markets, and enhance Canada's international standing as a trading partner.

Ministers also launched a Marine Transportation Working Group to explore the role of marine transportation in Canada, which is vital to our federal, provincial and territorial economies and provides critical services to many rural and remote regions, including to Indigenous and Northern communities. The working group will examine a number of topics including ferry operations, marine shipping, connecting rural and remote communities, and environmental impacts, with a view to increasing opportunities for enhanced dialogue and collaboration between governments.

Enhance safety

Task Force on School Bus Safety – Report and Recommendations

Ministers approved the release of the new [Strengthening School Bus Safety in Canada report](#) from the federal, provincial and territorial Task Force on School Bus Safety, which confirms that school buses in Canada have an excellent safety record. The Task Force reviewed all aspects of school bus safety, including seatbelts. The report identifies promising technologies that can make school buses even safer, such as camera technologies, automatic emergency braking, and extended stop-arms.

Entry-level training for commercial drivers

Ministers reached an important milestone for road safety by approving a Canada-wide standard for entry-level training of commercial motor vehicle drivers. This standard will be included in the National Safety Code, which provides support for jurisdictions as they work toward ensuring that drivers across Canada have access to cost-effective training to safely operate their vehicles.

Enhancing Collaboration on Rail Safety

Ministers agreed to increase collaboration in the Council to address and resolve rail safety issues of shared responsibility including governance, proximity of railways to communities, trespassing and grade crossings. The [2018 Railway Safety Act Review](#) recognized that these issues require governments to work together to find solutions, along with railways and other stakeholders. Ministers directed officials to explore solutions for consideration at their next meeting.

Address climate change

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate and explore opportunities to increase zero-emission vehicle adoption as a means of transitioning to a low-carbon transportation system.

Address mobility challenges

Ministers endorsed the [Interim Report of the Urban Mobility Task Force](#). The Report identifies challenges and opportunities to improve the flow of people and goods through and to urban regions. Ministers also reiterated the importance of continued collaboration between all levels of government on urban transportation issues such as public transit funding and congestion relief to keep Canada competitive and attractive for investment.

“This is my fifth Council with my transportation and highway safety counterparts and I am always pleased to see the collaboration between jurisdictions to find best practices and solutions to the transportation challenges we face,” said the Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport. “Since last year, we have made progress on important files, including improving school bus safety, adopting a national standard for entry-level training of commercial motor vehicle drivers, and launching the Pan-Canadian Competitive Trade Corridor Initiative. These tangible actions play a significant role in ensuring prosperity, and most importantly, the safety and security for all Canadians.”

“Our export-based economy relies on the safe, efficient and reliable movement of people and goods through our transportation system,” said the Honourable Greg Ottenbreit, Saskatchewan Minister of Highways and Infrastructure. “Most of the issues we’re working on have the goal of improving safety for the driving public, which is of the utmost importance. Safety must continue to be at the centre of every decision we make.”

Federal, provincial and territorial Ministers have agreed to continue examining the use of emerging automated and connected technologies, and taking collective action regarding the testing and deployment of these vehicles on roads in Canada.

Ministers will also pursue their work together to enhance transportation safety, support trade and address climate change so that Canadians can depend on a safe, reliable, efficient and modern transportation system.

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