

Transportation and Highway Safety priorities discussed at annual meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers

February 23, 2024, Montreal – Today, Canada’s Minister of Transport, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, and the Minister of Infrastructure for the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Caroline Wawzonek, co-chaired the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety.

Ministers explored ways to strengthen supply chains and trade corridors, and discussed transportation in northern, remote and rural regions. Federal, provincial, and territorial ministers are working together to ensure Canadians can benefit from safe, reliable, efficient, and modern transportation infrastructure. Their discussions focused on:

- strengthening supply chains to support Canada’s economy and make life more affordable for all Canadians,
- enhancing transportation safety, security, resiliency and decarbonization of the transportation system,
- collaborating on addressing the transportation infrastructure gaps that exist in northern and rural regions, and
- the need to replenish and enhance the National Trade Corridors Fund (NTCF).

Supply chains

Ministers know efficient, resilient, and competitive transportation systems support a strong economy. They are key to ensuring that Canadians have access to affordable goods, when they need them.

Ministers held a roundtable discussion to assess measures to increase efficiency and resiliency across our supply chains. They discussed the performance of the transportation sector and explored promising ways to work together to ensure stronger and more reliable trade corridors and gateway performance.

Ministers emphasized that strategic physical and digital transportation infrastructure investments are essential for the performance and resilience of the sector. At the meeting, the provincial and territorial ministers stressed the importance for the federal government to continue supporting their priorities in terms of transport infrastructure. For his part, the federal minister acknowledged the need for additional investments in this area, including road infrastructure, and undertook to report the provinces' and territories' requests to his Cabinet colleagues.

Ministers established a working group to understand Canada’s transportation supply chains infrastructure and capacity investment needs over the near, medium, and longer term. Ministers expect this work will be leveraged, where applicable by each government to:

- inform policy development,
- support potential intergovernmental coordination regarding shared interests related to attracting foreign direct investment, and
- build cases for funding infrastructure projects and programs.

Transportation for northern, remote and rural regions

Ministers understand the importance of strong transportation services and infrastructure in northern, remote and rural communities.

Ministers discussed the vulnerabilities of northern, remote and rural transportation networks after recent natural disasters. They anticipate increased infrastructure pressures in northern regions due to warmer and shorter winters, including a shortened winter road season. As such, they discussed how ongoing investments made by federal, provincial and territorial governments can improve the safety, reliability and resiliency of northern, remote and rural

transportation networks. They also discussed the need for predictable, flexible, long-term funding to help with the rehabilitation, and upgrades required for the roads, airstrips and bridges network.

Northern residents, including many Indigenous communities, often rely on air travel for essential services, including medical travel, all-season resupply, economic development and tourism. Ministers discussed the changing environment in the air transportation sector. They will continue to work with industry stakeholders to ensure that reliable, competitive and affordable air services are available in northern, remote and rural communities across Canada.

Transportation systems vulnerabilities

Supply chains are facing important challenges due to economic slowdown, as well as natural disasters, labour disruptions and evolving security issues from geopolitical events. Ministers discussed measures to mitigate these vulnerabilities and maintain safe, secure and efficient transportation systems. They also talked about how to safeguard supply chains in this context, from coast to coast to coast.

Labour shortages and skills development

The transportation sector in Canada is facing critical labour and skills shortages. This results in disruptions in the movement of goods and people across the country. Ministers highlighted the need for a strong transportation workforce in supporting resilient supply chains. Within their transportation mandates, ministers support continued collaboration on this issue working with their respective counterparts in labour-market development and skills training.

Stolen vehicles

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments know that auto theft is affecting many Canadians. It's a problem that requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Ministers continue to support the work underway by ministers responsible for public safety to help address the elements of this issue related to their transportation mandates.

Commercial vehicle safety

Ministers directed the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) to analyze the challenges with the current model for safety certificates. Notably, Ministers asked the CCMTA to examine potential options to address the issue of carriers with problematic safety records that continue to operate across jurisdictions despite prohibitive measures implemented within a province or territory.

National Indigenous Organizations

Prior to their annual meeting, ministers met with representatives from National Indigenous Organizations. They discussed:

- reconciliation and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls,
- transportation into and out of Indigenous communities and,
- safe, reliable and accessible transportation.

Ministers are committed to continuing the dialogue with Indigenous peoples. They are also committed to ongoing engagement with their respective Indigenous partners to better understand the transportation challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada and take responsive actions whenever possible and appropriate. Minister Rodriguez committed to report back on the progress made on the issues discussed with these organizations.

Quotes from Ministers Rodriguez and Wawzonek

“Working with my provincial and territorial counterparts is essential to make sure we act efficiently on our key priorities. Our first priority is and must always be the safety and security of our transport networks, but we also need to collaborate to ensure our supply chains support trade and deliver the goods for Canadians, where they need them, when they need them, and at affordable prices. We are responsible for the physical links that connect us all together, as

a united country, and I'm glad to see we have strong agreement on that." – The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Transport

"Working with Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations is of critical importance to tackle the transportation challenges we face as a country. Strengthening relationships with industry stakeholders also remains key to ensuring all Canadians can benefit from modern transportation infrastructure that connects people and goods from coast to coast to coast, and this meeting identified several steps we can take on both fronts. The Northwest Territories looks forward to welcoming the Council of Deputy Ministers this summer to continue the national focus on addressing northern, remote and rural issues." - The Honourable Caroline Wawzonek, Minister of Infrastructure for the Northwest Territories

CONTACTS:

Laura Scaffidi

Press Secretary

Office of the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez

Minister of Transport, Ottawa

Laura.Scaffidi@tc.gc.ca

Media Relations

Transport Canada, Ottawa

Media@tc.gc.ca

613-993-0055

Press Secretary

Cabinet Communications

Government of the Northwest Territories

PressSecretary@gov.nt.ca