

Transportation and Highway Safety ministers collaborate on the safe and economic recovery of Canada's transportation sector

February 12, 2021, Ottawa – Today, Canada's Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra, and the Minister of Transportation for Alberta, the Honourable Ric McIver, virtually co-chaired the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety¹.

Ministers are collaborating to support a successful and safe transportation sector recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which will facilitate Canada's economic recovery.

Earlier today, in a separate session, ministers had a constructive dialogue with Indigenous leaders on shared transportation issues, including safety and security, infrastructure, economic opportunities, access to remote and northern communities, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During their meeting, ministers recognized the important role the transportation sector has played during the pandemic to support frontline health workers and keep people and goods moving across the country. Pilots, air crews, air traffic controllers, port workers, mariners, train crews, truck drivers, transit operators, and many others have contributed to sustaining Canada's health and economy. Keeping these workers healthy has been a top priority for all ministers.

Strong and safe transportation services for Canadians

Ministers engaged in constructive discussions to ensure Canadians can continue to count on strong and resilient public transportation services and facilities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recognizing the growing mobility challenges affecting urban passenger and freight transportation, ministers approved the release of the [Final Report](#) from the federal, provincial and territorial Task Force on Urban Mobility. The report stresses the importance of collaborative and innovative solutions to help reduce delays in commuting time for Canadians while considering the environment. It also raises awareness on solutions implemented and considered across Canada to address urban mobility challenges such as land use planning, transit funding, and new technologies.

Ministers discussed a range of issues in response to the global pandemic, including testing and other new border measures taken to keep Canadians safe and preventing the virus and new variants from being imported into Canada.

Dramatic decreases in passengers due to the global pandemic have led to significant financial challenges in the aviation sector. Ministers discussed the implementation of measures that have been announced to protect transportation workers as well as support for airport operators and airlines, especially those serving remote communities.

Through the work of the Marine Transportation Working Group launched last year, ministers recognize the important role of marine transportation in the movement of people and goods across Canada's coastal and inland waterways, including to rural, Indigenous and northern communities.

Building back our economy

Ministers are committed to supporting the safe restart of Canada's economy and to continuing to help Canadians by creating jobs in the transportation sector.

¹ Newfoundland and Labrador is operating in a caretaker period due to a provincial election and was unable to participate.

To support the restart of the air sector, Ministers directed the creation of a working group co-chaired by Canada, Ontario and New-Brunswick, to collaborate with public health partners to look at the conditions necessary for the successful, safe recovery of air travel, including airports, airlines and navigation services. Ministers further highlighted that they heard concerns from communities on service level changes by NAV CANADA and the importance of ensuring that any potential service reductions would not introduce undue safety risks for Canadians.

Ministers acknowledged the importance of efficient and resilient trade corridors as well as the role and operations of our major ports, for continued success of Canadian businesses on the global stage. Strategic investments, collaborative planning and better regulatory coordination between provinces and territories improve the efficiency of our transportation network, boost Canada's economic performance and reduce cost of doing business. Ministers discussed how the work on trade corridors can be focused and prioritized and asked that work be undertaken on this front. As such, they approved the release of the Phase 1 [Interim Report](#) from the federal, provincial and territorial Task Force on the Pan-Canadian Competitive Trade Corridor Initiative.

Ongoing safety improvements

Ministers recognized the ongoing importance of collaborating on school bus safety, vulnerable road users and railway safety. They reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and supported the continued analysis of heavy and light vehicle collision data.

Following the [Report](#) of the Task Force on School Bus Safety last year, two school bus seatbelt pilot projects were launched in collaboration with Transport Canada: one in British Columbia and the other in Ontario. These pilots will help generate practical evidence to inform decision-making in this area.

Ministers approved an amendment to the National Safety Code Standard on entry-level training for commercial motor vehicle drivers to allow for more flexible alternatives to in-class training.

Ministers agreed to work collaboratively on the successful and effective implementation of measures that would ensure the safe and efficient operation of commercial carriers.

Ministers discussed the collaborative work accomplished to follow through with the recommendations of the *Railway Safety Act* review report. To this end, they acknowledged the importance of the work done by the Railway Association of Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on the rail safety [Proximity Initiative](#). The initiative will help the governments set out guidelines for the planning and the construction of new community developments located in close proximity to railway operations. It aims to support a collaborative approach among railways and communities, and thereby improve safety for Canadians who live and work near railways.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers have agreed to pursue their work together to enhance transportation safety in all modes, support trade, advance work on automated and connected vehicles, and address climate change so Canadians benefit from a safe, reliable, efficient and modern transportation system.

"The challenges the transportation sector has faced during these past months have been extraordinary," said Canada's Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra. "I am proud to be part of this roundtable to relentlessly work on finding solutions to transportation issues important to Canadians, regardless if they are travellers, industry workers or business owners.

I am grateful to everyone who has shown a tremendous amount of courage and sense of community to ensure we have a strong economic recovery and a safe and reliable transportation system."

"Each Minister on the Council brought a collaborative and evidence-based approach to improving the safe movement of people and goods on our highways, waterways, and transitways. Together, we thank the transportation workers who've kept Canadians fed and businesses moving," said Minister of Alberta Transportation, the Honourable Ric McIver. "As Canadians exhibit their resilience by reducing the spread of COVID-19, we need to have safe and efficient trade corridors in place that will sustain Canada's post-pandemic economic recovery."

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