

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Intergovernmental Relations

**PREMIERS ASK FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO JOIN THEM TO MAKE
SOCIAL POLICY WORK FOR CANADIANS**

VICTORIA – Canada's provinces* and territories are looking to the federal government to follow through on its obligations under the Social Union Framework Agreement, B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, chair of the provincial and territorial premiers, said today.

Many of the commitments made by the federal government in February 1999 are still unfulfilled, and the time has come to follow through on those obligations, Campbell said.

Campbell released the sixth annual progress report to premiers on social policy renewal today. The report has been reviewed and endorsed by premiers except the premier of Québec.

Great progress has been made in improving the lives of Canadians through health, education and other social programs, Campbell said. However, much remains to be done, and the premiers are calling upon the federal government to live up to its commitments to social program financing.

The report states that any new, Canada-wide social programs must be built upon a solid foundation of adequate, affordable, flexible, stable and sustainable funding. New federal initiatives in social policy areas must be sustained over time and not come at the expense of public funding for core programs like health and education.

Through this report, premiers confirm that interprovincial/territorial co-operation is the cornerstone of co-ordinated work in the social policy sector. This work requires the federal government to live up to the letter and the spirit of the Social Union Framework Agreement, for example, by fully consulting with provinces and territories before exercising federal spending power in areas of provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Premiers call on the federal government to meet their commitment and put in place an appropriate process for resolving intergovernmental disputes in such areas as the Canada Health Act. Premiers look forward to receiving greater co-operation from the federal government in health, disability and other areas where federal involvement is appropriate.

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* While sharing essentially the same concerns, the Government of Québec does not intend to adhere to the federal/provincial/territorial approach or the provincial/territorial approach to social policies. Furthermore, Québec did not sign the Social Union Framework Agreement. Consequently, any reference to the federal/provincial/territorial positions or provincial/territorial positions in this document does not include the Government of Québec.

The report provides an update on activities of the Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal since the 2000 Annual Premiers' Conference, including the implementation of the Social Union Framework Agreement. The report contains a workplan of activities for the council for 2001/02. The council has identified priorities, and premiers have endorsed those priorities, in areas of health, children, housing, disability issues, and post-secondary education and skills.

The report is available on the Internet at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/igrs/rpts/>

This news release is online at www.gov.bc.ca

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