Québec and Ontario held their seventh joint meeting of cabinet ministers today in Québec City.

Sharing much more than just a border, Québec and Ontario have sustained a partnership older than even the federation itself. Since 2008, the provinces have enhanced that ongoing partnership, using these joint meetings of cabinet ministers to advance their shared priorities of growing the economy, creating jobs, attracting business and investments, fighting climate change, and making sure the people of Ontario and Québec have every opportunity to get ahead.

Together, Québec and Ontario are influencing the policy agenda for the country, building business, research, and cultural connections, and preparing for the economy of the future.

The partnership between Ontario and Québec is grounded both in a rich history and in the provinces’ shared vision of a fairer, better future. Modern, prosperous, successful societies are inclusive and seek each other out. Ontario and Québec look forward to continuing to grow together, as governments and as communities.

Key outcomes of Ontario and Québec’s joint meetings to date include:

Climate Change

For nearly a decade, Ontario and Québec have worked together to advance the global fight against climate change across Canada. Beginning with the Provincial-Territorial Cap and Trade Initiative in 2008, they played a major part in bringing provinces and territories to commit to foster a transition to a lower-carbon economy, including through Ontario's announcement of its plan to introduce an emissions cap program and its interest in linking it with Québec’s. Through their actions and leadership, including during the Québec City Summit on Climate Change and the Climate Summit of the Americas in Toronto, both partners inspired Canada’s position in the December 2015 Paris Agreement negotiations.

Economy

Together, Ontario and Québec form Canada’s largest economic region and are responsible for more than half of Canada’s total GDP and approximately half of all interprovincial trade. Ontario and Québec have worked closely together to encourage economic growth, setting an example Canada-wide. In 2009, the provinces signed the Ontario-Québec Trade and Cooperation Agreement, to expand Ontario-Québec trade, remove red tape, improve labour mobility, and support a sustainable, thriving business climate in both provinces. The Agreement introduced a new collaborative approach focused on transparency and partnership. The provinces continued to build upon this strong foundation, introducing significant enhancements in 2015 and 2016 to further increase access to public procurement.
International Trade

Ontario and Québec are strongly aligned in their support for free trade and open procurement. Premier Wynne and Premier Couillard have both actively engaged with business and political leaders across the U.S. to advocate for the trade and business partnerships that support growth and opportunities across North America. This spring, Ontario and Québec worked together to successfully neutralize New York State’s proposed “Buy America” legislation that would have threatened jobs and businesses in both provinces.

At today’s joint meeting, Ontario and Québec are continuing their work together to strengthen trading relationships across Canada and the U.S. Raymond Bachand, John Gero, Raymond Chretien and Jim Peterson — Québec’s and Ontario’s special advisors on NAFTA and softwood lumber — led a discussion on the current state of Canada-US relations, which provided an additional opportunity for strategic alignment between the provinces heading into the third round of NAFTA renegotiations on September 23.

Electricity

Through improvements to the capacity of the electricity transportation infrastructure and enhanced access to clean and renewable electricity, Ontario and Québec have taken great strides independently and together to modernize electricity systems in both provinces.

Ontario and Québec have worked closely to help make electricity more affordable and reliable, while continuing to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by leveraging Québec’s clean hydro power. Starting with the 2014 agreement to share provincial energy surpluses, in 2016 the provinces reached a historic electricity trade agreement that will reduce electricity system costs for Ontario consumers by about $70 million over the course of the agreement and reduce electricity sector GHG emissions by approximately 1 million tonnes per year.

Building on this agreement, Hydro-Quebec and Ontario’s Independent Electricity System Operator are continuing discussions on future opportunities for collaboration that would benefit people in both provinces.

Innovation

The methods by which goods and services are designed and produced are continually evolving. Rapidly detecting new trends and understanding the evolution of markets is essential to stay competitive and to be able to assist our businesses, our workers and our citizens in adapting rapidly to new technologies.

Ontario and Québec are leaders in the advanced technology sector, grounded in a joint commitment to workforce readiness and partnership in the public, private and academic sectors. In 2016, Ontario and Québec signed an agreement supporting the development of digital testbed infrastructure for the 5G network, which will help businesses stay at the cutting edge of technology. Significant progress has been made over the last year to advance the 5G project. Québec and Ontario are working together with the federal government on an operating level Memorandum of Understanding to establish a common reporting framework and ensure economic benefits are equally distributed between the provinces.
Announced today, the provinces are also now intensifying collaboration in the field of artificial intelligence to advance research, attract international top talent and global investment, create good jobs and accelerate Canada’s standing as a world-class technology centre.

**Sustainable Development**

Québec and Ontario are strong partners when it comes to protecting their shared environment and advocating for sustainable development. Connected by the St. Lawrence River Basin and the Great Lakes, the provinces have undertaken a number of initiatives to protect our shared waterways and aquatic ecosystems. Recognizing the value in maintaining sustainable development in other sectors, particularly transportation, energy and forestry, collaborative efforts have resulted in joint processes/agreements to address pipeline project proposals through the region, promote sustainable forestry management practices and enviro-friendly alternatives through the creation of an electric vehicle charging corridor between the two provinces.

Furthermore, the signing of the [Ontario-Québec Environmental Cooperation Agreement](#) at last year’s joint meeting highlights the close cooperation between the two provinces. This agreement brought all previous agreements and areas of cooperation under one umbrella, enabling a more coordinated approach to the protection of our shared environment. Ontario and Québec have been in close collaboration since the agreement was signed, expanding our cooperation on climate change, water management and air quality management. In particular, a spills notification process has been approved that helps coordinate efforts on emergency response to spills as well as prevention and management efforts.

Collaboration and the sharing and exchange of information in other areas including environmental laboratory cooperation; contaminated soil management; environmental compliance and enforcement; and pesticides management is also occurring regularly.

**The Francophonie**

Ontario is home to the largest number of Francophones living outside Québec. With the 2014 [Declaration on the Canadian Francophonie](#), the provinces agreed to work together to preserve the vitality of Francophone communities and foster connections across the country. This includes supporting cultural representation and maintaining quality services for Francophones, such as Radio-Canada. Québec played an active part in the 2015 celebrations marking 400 years of the French presence in Ontario, including [Premier Couillard’s address to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario](#) on May 11, 2015. Québec also supported Ontario’s successful bid for observer status with the [Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)](#). Last Fall, Ontario and Québec signed a new cooperation agreement on Canadian Francophonie.

By 2020, Ontario will open the first Franco-Ontarian University, with governance “by and for” the French-speaking community, to meet the growing need for French-language postsecondary education programs — particularly in central and southwestern Ontario.

Today, Premiers Wynne and Couillard reaffirmed the importance they attached to increasing Francophone immigration by mandating their responsible ministers to pursue actions at the federal-provincial-territorial level, including a new symposium between governments and francophone communities, and a new joint meeting of immigration ministers and those responsible for La Francophonie.