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## **Ministers Accelerate Affordable Housing and Move Forward on a New Housing Approach**

**GATINEAU, Quebec, November 30, 2004** — Federal-Provincial-Territorial ministers responsible for housing met today to discuss improvements to current programs, developing a long term approach to provide a continuum of housing and a process for increased co-operation.

Ministers discussed the need for greater flexibility and sustainability to make housing more responsive to the different needs across the country. The Ministers recognized that 1.7 million households including seniors, people with disabilities, Aboriginal Peoples, homeless people, new immigrants and low-income families are particularly vulnerable.

Provincial and territorial ministers submitted to federal minister Joe Fontana the principles to which they unanimously agreed during their meeting on November 29th. These principles will guide provinces and territories in current and future housing initiatives. Minister Fontana declared his interest in continuing discussions on an approach that will be respectful of the specific needs and priorities of provinces and territories. These principles adopted by provinces and territories will further guide bilateral negotiations between the federal government and provinces and territories.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers agreed to continue these discussions at a meeting in the spring of 2005.

The federal, provincial and territorial ministers also discussed modifications to current affordable housing programs that will accelerate the provision of affordable housing to low to moderate income Canadians.

Ministers also confirmed their support to address the pressing needs for additional housing supply and to sustain the existing stock in rural, remote and northern regions of Canada.

The Honourable Joe Fontana, federal Minister of Labour and Housing and the Honourable David Morse, Nova Scotia Minister of Community Services chaired the meeting.

"Housing is more than just bricks and mortar. It is about people," said Minister Fontana. "Regardless of where you live, we all agree that a decent and secure place to live ensures that all citizens can access and contribute to the social and economic life of our communities and our country. Our discussions have focused on program flexibilities to allow us to move quickly to make more affordable housing available to those in need."

Minister Morse noted that provinces and territories each have unique housing needs that require a variety of tools and solutions. "Flexibility in funding approaches is essential to enable provinces and territories to ensure that current housing dollars are used in the best way to meet the needs of the local residents. It is important that we continue to work together to achieve the common goal of providing better housing for our families, seniors and Aboriginal Peoples."

Nova Scotia is pleased to assume the role of co-chair of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Housing for the next year.

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