

# Lots of real work for premiers to do [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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### EXCERPTS:

It would be refreshing if Canada's provincial premiers, who gather in Victoria today for their annual meeting, put their heads together and did something useful.

Canadians are tired of their annual complaints that they don't get enough money from Ottawa. They are sick of intergovernmental turf wars that produce nothing, solve nothing and fray everyone's nerves.

There is no shortage of issues the premiers could tackle. The services that affect people most directly - health care, education, child care, job training, water inspection and urban development - are all under their control.

Nor are they as cash-strapped as they claim.

Six of the provinces - Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick - are running surpluses. All are handing out tax cuts.

Rather than squabbling over federal transfers, which are outside of their jurisdiction, they should act in areas where they do have responsibility.

They could address the challenges facing Canada's cities. The country's municipal infrastructure is decaying. Its urban centres are struggling with homelessness, gridlock, pollution and severe concentrations of poverty. The mayors of Canada's five largest cities have pleaded with the provinces to give them the tools they need to halt this decline. So far, they have been greeted with deafening silence.

They could share best practices. Manitoba, for instance, has a successful home care program. British Columbia has kept post-secondary education affordable. Quebec leads the way in child care. One of the advantages of having 10 different social systems is that each can learn from the others.

There is plenty for the premiers to do, if their objective is to make life better for their citizens. It would be a shame - but not a surprise - if they wasted the next two days pointing fingers and crying poor.

reproduced from the Toronto Star.

**Region:** Newfoundland <sup>[2]</sup>

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