

## Final Report

**Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) Annual Summit  
Portland, Oregon  
July 19-22, 2011**

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### **Overview:**

Alberta's delegation to this year's PNWER annual summit in Portland, Oregon included Minister Iris Evans, Minister Mel Knight, Minister Ron Liepert, Minister Rob Renner, Minister Greg Weadick and nine MLAs. The meeting was well-attended (550 delegates) and allowed Alberta Ministers and MLAs the opportunity to network with legislators, institutions and companies from across the PNWER region. Delegates participated in 24 sessions with topics including energy, environment, sustainable development, water policy, innovation, border issues, and trade and economic development. Eight policy tours were offered to facilities, business and areas of interest in the Portland area. A Cross-Border Livestock Health meeting was held in conjunction with the summit, bringing together animal and agriculture specialists from across the region.

### **Mission Objectives:**

The mission was successful in meeting a number of objectives:

1. Represent Alberta's interests at the PNWER summit.
2. Ensure Alberta has a strong voice in regional matters through PNWER.
3. Build contacts with U.S. decision makers, and convey the message that Alberta is a resourceful, responsible energy producer and a strong supporter of greater economic co-operation within the PNWER region.
4. Highlight the importance of efficient trade corridors between Alberta and the U.S. that includes efficient movement of goods through the border.
5. Promoted strengthened Alberta-U.S. ties in a broad range of interests.

### **Results:**

Alberta Ministers and MLAs addressed a variety of issues relevant to the province's interests including advanced technology, agriculture, trade and economic development, border issues, energy, and the environment.

All working group sessions were co-chaired by a public and private sector representative. The summit allowed PNWER members to discuss the region's economy, and to recommend new policy directives to the PNWER Executive Committee for consideration.

### **July 19**

PNWER President, Minister Mel Knight, and Alberta PNWER Chair, George Groeneveld, participated in the Executive Committee meeting on behalf of Alberta. The summit's opening reception featured the Honourable Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan.

## **July 20-22**

Members of the delegation attended working group sessions to discuss issues and develop action items for final PNWER resolutions. During these meetings, members of the delegation identified key areas where PNWER jurisdictions and the private sector could collaborate.

Highlights from the meetings:

### **Renewable Energy**

- The session discussed that large-scale renewable energy generation will not go ahead until large investment occurs in the transmission grid.
- In terms of dams where there is risk of an overflow, air bubble build-up in the water from spill action leads to fish-kill situations. Environmentally friendly water release methods need to be deployed where possible by hydroelectric operators.

### **Tourism**

- Discussion focused on Canada and the U.S. collaborating on issuing visas for tourists from Asia that would enable tour companies to cross into both countries as they run cross-border tour programs.
- With the recent economic downturn, government funded tourism agencies face severe challenges regarding operational costs. Options being considered range from involving the private sector, to reducing services, to shut-down of tourism agencies/departments.

### **Trade and Economic Development Session**

- Officials from Canada and the U.S. outlined efforts to increase trade and reduce border wait times for inspection of goods between the two countries.
- Minister Evans presented an overview on the New West Partnership and the collaborative effort by partners to increase trade with Asia.
- There was also an examination of emerging opportunities in India.

### **Invasive Species**

- An overview of the threats and management implications of invasive species such as Zebra/Quagga mussels was provided. The session focused on ways to control and slow the spread of invasive species and co-ordinating efforts between jurisdictions.

### **Legislative Energy Horizons Institute**

- The Legislative Energy Horizons Institute ran concurrent with the PNWER Summit. It is designed to educate U.S. state and Canadian provincial legislators on the North American energy infrastructure and delivery system.
- Minister Liepert provided an overview of the proceedings of Canadian Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference and an update on the progress in building a Canadian energy framework.

## **Disaster Resilience**

- Jurisdictions reported their progress in disaster resilience and response planning efforts. It was recognized that standardized response and methodology is needed as a baseline for all jurisdictions to follow to allow jurisdictions to operate interchangeably without encumbrance when needed.

## **Transportation**

- With the cost of building a high-speed rail line between Seattle and Portland, and the current economic situation, it is unlikely that the project will be built anytime soon.
- Coal and potash shipments to Asian markets, using Washington ports, are receiving considerable push-back by residents along rail routes. Shippers may be forced to look at ports outside of Washington to get their products to market.

## **Workforce**

- Canada and the U.S., and western countries in general, face situations of aging workforces and replacing retiring workers while recruiting new workers and competing with the world. A concerted effort is needed to maintain a highly skilled and trained workforce to remain relevant and competitive.

## **Arctic Caucus**

- Arctic Caucus members shared information on infrastructure needs, and discussed regional policies related to Arctic development.
- Alaska is investigating the feasibility of burning natural gas to create electricity for export using a DC power line to be built either through Alberta to the lower 48 states or through an undersea DC line to the U.S. west coast.

## **Energy**

- Minister Liepert provided an overview on the recent meeting of Canadian energy ministers and the progress in developing a Canadian Energy Strategy.
- A roundtable composed of industry and legislative representatives discussed a bi-national strategy for energy security and infrastructure siting.

## **Cross Border Livestock Health**

- The fourth Cross Border Livestock Health Conference was held in conjunction with the PNWER meeting with the purpose of enhancing relationships and building networks between Canadian provincial and U.S. state jurisdictions.
- The conference focused on the hypothetical impact of a foot and mouth disease outbreak in the PNWER region. It was agreed that an outbreak anywhere in the region would severely impact all jurisdictions and that a co-ordinated approach prior to an outbreak should be developed.

## **Sustainable Development**

- The discussion on smart grid focused on developing eco-friendly buildings and districts within cities to maximize the benefits of this technology.
- It was suggested that the top Platinum level of the LEEDS (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification does not go far enough. Buildings in other parts of the world are being built to higher standard and it was recommended that the PNWER region follow suit.

- Alberta Environment presented the Cumulative Effects Management system and the integrated approach the province is taking to resource management.

### **Border Sessions**

- Sessions featured representatives from Canadian and U.S. federal governments reporting on the progress of the “Beyond the Border” initiative.
- Trusted traveler programs have increased throughput at borders while enforcement of passenger manifest lists for flights destined to the U.S. has been effective in identifying and removing individuals of risk.
- Installation of scanners at ports in Canada and the U.S. to inspect inbound cargo is making a positive impact. The current effort involves installing scanners at offshore ports to scan cargo and eliminate risks on vessels destined for North America.

### **Innovation**

- Minister Weadick provided an overview of Alberta’s efforts in the role innovation plays in strengthening the province’s position as a world leader in using science to seek solutions. Panelists shared similar information on policy frameworks designed to encourage innovation in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Health Care**

- Clinicians, policy-makers, and academics discussed the impacts of obesity on health care systems, the economy, and health status in Canada and the U.S. Obesity has become the major public health issue facing developed countries and is a particular problem in North America. Discussion focused on policy options to address obesity.

### **Water Policy**

- Minister Renner provided an overview on the Bow River project and the innovative steps that were developed to manage water needs. It was agreed that this project can be used as a guide to follow in terms of improving environmental outcomes while finding new and creative means to manage facilities in a water basin area.

### **Alternative Fuel Vehicles**

- Alternative fuel vehicle technology has come a long way but a number of hurdles need to be overcome; i.e., high cost, limited range, long recharge times, and lack of recharge infrastructure.
- Electric plug-in technology has application in truck stop centers and can potentially eliminate the need for trucks to idle in order to maintain refrigerated cargo loads.

### **Energy Storage**

- The session reviewed the challenges facing industry in managing intermittent or unreliable energy production from wind or solar and focused on advances in storage technology.

*Presentations from most of the sessions made during the PNWER Summit are available at: [www.pnwer.org/2011AnnualSummit/Presentations.aspx](http://www.pnwer.org/2011AnnualSummit/Presentations.aspx)*

**Delegation:**

Honourable Iris Evans, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations  
Honourable Mel Knight, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development  
Honourable Rob Renner, Minister of Environment  
Honourable Ron Liepert, Minister of Energy  
Honourable Greg Weadick, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology  
Cal Dallas, MLA Red Deer-South  
Alana DeLong, MLA Calgary-Bow  
Arno Doerkson, MLA Strathmore-Brooks  
Kyle Fawcett, MLA Calgary-North Hill  
George Groeneveld, MLA Highwood  
Richard Marz, MLA Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills  
Len Mitzel, MLA Cypress Hills-Medicine Hat  
Bridget Pastoor, MLA Lethbridge-East  
Ray Prins, MLA Lacombe-Ponoka  
Marika Giesen, Executive Assistant to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations  
Stacey Leighton, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development  
Jeff Kasbrick, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Environment  
Courtney Luimes, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Energy  
Natalie Sigalet, Special Assistant to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology  
Lindsay Hoffman, Scheduling Coordinator to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations