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Conference of Regional Legislators discusses impact of US Midterm elections and USMCA

WHITEHORSE, YUKON - Legislators from the Pacific Northwest states and western Canadian provinces and territories met in Whitehorse for the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's (PNWER) Economic Leadership Forum. PNWER President Larry Doke, MLA Saskatchewan, opened the conference by welcoming delegates. A key issue on the first day of the conference was how the US midterm elections and changes in the US Congress will affect the ratification process of the new US, Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA). "It is too soon to determine if the Democrat leadership in the House will support the ratification of the USMCA," said Oregon Senator Arnie Roblan. The Senator clarified that according to US law, the Congress can only vote up or down on the Agreement, and cannot amend or change it.

Alaska Representative DeLena Johnson spoke about new Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy and leadership in the Alaska House, which is uncertain as votes are still being counted. Participants heard from Keith Halliday on an overview of recent elections in Canada, and what to expect in the next 12 months, where we will see elections at the provincial and federal levels in Alberta and Ottawa.

Yukon Premier Sandy Silver provided a keynote address and highlighted the importance of First Nations in Yukon's economic development strategy and the expansive opportunities available in the territory. The Premier emphasized how important these international and inter-provincial relationships are, as the region has similar challenges and can learn from each other. He mentioned the importance of the Shakwak highway to both the Yukon and Alaska.

Brandon Lee, Canadian Consul General to the Pacific northwest states said, "The USMCA contains several new provisions that provide considerations for First Nations, as well as new sections on digital trade." Kathy Dhanani, US Consul General in Vancouver, and Lucia Piazza, US Consul General in Calgary noted that this region

(PNWER) is well known for fostering a collaborative environment and building trust and partnerships across the US – Canada border.

The Consul Generals also highlighted several best practices in the bi-national region, including the Cascadia Innovation Corridor focused on fostering technology in our interconnected region, Beyond Preclearance Initiative developing innovative pilots for utilizing technology at border crossings, and the cooperation on many key cross border issues including transboundary water, invasive species, and mutual collaboration on security and law enforcement.

Delegates heard from Grand Chief Peter Johnston who gave a history of Yukon First Nations and explained the Yukon First Nations' governance model and the legislation which created it. The Grand Chief was followed by a panel of First Nation leaders, moderated by Shirley Adamson on First Nations leadership and governance. Discussions surrounding First Nations economic development, tourism opportunities, governance, and leadership in the territory was a key highlight of the conference's first day.

The afternoon concluded with a panel discussing Energy Solutions in the North – which highlighted the solar project in Old Crow, a wind to heat storage demonstration project in Whitehorse, and the role of Yukon College's Industrial Research in Northern Energy Innovation.

The final event of the day was a reception at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre hosted by the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce.

The PNWER Economic Leadership Forum takes place November 13-15 in Whitehorse, Yukon, and brings together legislators, policymakers, and business leaders from the US and Canada. For more information, visit www.pnwer.org and www.twitter.com/pnwer.

ABOUT PNWER

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public/private organization created by statute in 1991. Member jurisdictions include the US states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington, and the Canadian provinces and territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success"; and serve as a conduit to exchange information.

For more information on PNWER, visit www.pnwer.org.

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