

Notes for Premier Fentie  
Pacific Northwest Economic Region  
Anchorage, Alaska  
July 25, 2007

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- Good afternoon PNWER representatives, ladies and gentlemen.
- It is always a pleasure to visit Alaska and Anchorage.
- I am pleased to be here today on the third day of the 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER).
- The topics of this summit have touched upon a number of areas of common interest which bind our regions together, including the environment and climate change, energy, border issues, sustainable development, and tourism.
- Yukon appreciates the value of belonging to the PNWER partnership and is honoured to have had our minister of Economic Development Jim Kenyon serve as PNWER's president.
- Participation in PNWER, which brings representatives of the private sector and government together, is an important tool in fostering sustainable economic development throughout our regions.
- This fits with our government's focus on expanding and diversifying our territory's economy. It is all about collaboration.
- Working closely with other jurisdictions is the key to building a better quality of life for all our citizens.
- Let me give you some examples.
- Outside of PNWER, Yukon has formalized its commitments, through Intergovernmental Relations Accords, with a number of jurisdictions represented here today – these being Alaska, British Columbia and Alberta.
- Through these accords, our governments cooperate in the areas of tourism, transportation, trade and commerce, and resource development.

- Another example in cooperation is the close working relationship we have with my fellow territorial premiers – Joseph Handley of the Northwest Territories, and Paul Okalik of Nunavut.
- Over the last few years, we have enjoyed a history of working collaboratively.
- Taking a pan-northern approach to our issues has allowed us to move forward on matters of mutual importance to the North.
- And by doing so, we have successfully articulated our common agenda to the federal government and to the provincial premiers.
- On May 26 in Whitehorse, Premiers Handley and Okalik joined with me in launching *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada*.
- It offers Northerners an opportunity to speak with one voice.
- The vision is the beginning of a long-term process of sustained cooperation, and contains a number of issues critical to Northern Canadians.
- It focuses on priorities which include sovereignty and sustainable communities; adapting to climate change; and circumpolar relations.
- The *Northern Vision* is also an invitation to other governments, the private sector, and non-government organizations to partner with our territories, to build a more prosperous, sustainable and secure North.

- Canada's North is experiencing the impacts of climate change with melting glaciers and sea ice; instability of infrastructure from melting permafrost; and pest infestations – such as the spruce bark beetle.
- We are taking these effects very seriously and work continues to mitigate the outcomes – but we must do more.
- We realize that we must adapt to these changes through a range of activities including research, monitoring and collecting data, and assessing and improving vulnerable community infrastructure – sharing information and best practices.
- New engineering practices and standards must be developed to meet the challenges that climate change presents.
- And it is by meeting with our counterparts, as we are doing at this PNWER summit here in Anchorage, that we will be better able to meet the environmental challenges that lie ahead.
- The development of the North's vast resources continues to transform territorial economies and communities.
- Like many regions around the world, Yukon is benefiting from the rising demand for mineral resources and we continue to be one of 'Canada's Mining Hotspots'.
- We are the only jurisdiction in Canada with a single assessment regime – the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* – with fixed timelines for industrial and government projects.
- This summer Yukon has experienced a continued expansion of many mineral exploration and development projects across the territory.
- We are:
  - advancing oil and gas exploration and production,
  - developing forestry management plans, and
  - investing in human resource training, arts and culture, and the IT sector.

- All of these initiatives contribute to building sustainable communities.
- This is an exciting time for Yukon.
- Yukon is at the beginning of a long and promising new era in our economic growth and development.
- Our economic mainstays of tourism and resource development are strong and we are continuing our work to diversify Yukon's economy.
- Our focus is increasingly on research and development opportunities, one of which is to make Yukon a leader in northern climate change research by establishing Yukon College as a Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence, including a Cold Climate Innovation Cluster specializing in cold climate technology.
- Yukon's population is growing and our unemployment rate hit a historic low of 2.5% last December.
- Our projections indicate that Yukon's population will continue to grow to record levels, contributing to an ever expanding labour force.
- We will meet the future with a skilled labour force, rewarding career opportunities, and strong First Nation participation in both domestic and global economies.
- Given the strength of the global economy and the rise of Asian economies, we have the potential to be a significant part of the Pacific gateway region.
- With this in mind, we see the need for further infrastructure development to support sustainable economic development – such as a natural gas pipeline connecting Alaska producers to southern markets, and a rail link connecting the Alaska Railroad, through Yukon, to the North American rail system.
- For its part, Yukon is undertaking the necessary planning work to be 'pipeline ready' on the Canadian side.
- Efforts to date have focused on:

- enhancing intergovernmental cooperation with the governments of Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, and Alaska;
  - ensuring early First Nations engagement;
  - continued dialogue with gas producers and pipeline companies; and
  - addressing both environmental assessment and regulatory certainty in Canada.
- Earlier this week, you may have heard the Yukon's minister of Economic Development Jim Kenyon, and out-going president of PNWER, speak on the importance of the Alaska-Canada Rail Link.
  - This type of infrastructure would be a major component for sustained economic growth within Alaska, Yukon and beyond.
  - To this end, Yukon and Alaska have jointly undertaken a feasibility study that includes four main areas: market research, technical/engineering research, a business case assessment, and a full and phased investment business case.
  - Yukon's economy is growing and our strengthened relationship with our neighbours and participation in PNWER is key to our future success.
  - Partnerships like PNWER encourage growth and understanding between our jurisdictions and ensure the best future possible for all of our citizens.
  - Whether we talk about economic opportunities, trade, energy, the environment or security, we come away from summits such as these with a common understanding of the issues, as well as the will to cooperate and collaborate on issues within our region.
  - It is the work we do today that allows us to build the strong, viable communities, solid trade relationships, friendships, and partnerships of the future.

Thank you.