



NEWS RELEASE

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Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

OPEN, SECURE BORDERS VAN DONGEN'S FOCUS AT PNWER

VICTORIA – Balancing the need for border security with increased regional trade, tourism and economic development opportunities will top the agenda for Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations John van Dongen as he represents B.C. at the annual meeting of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), July 16 to 20 in Edmonton.

“As we’ve seen with the recent high-level dialogue between B.C. and Washington and the new B.C.-Alberta trade agreement, there are great benefits to be realized when B.C. works co-operatively with our partners throughout the region,” van Dongen said. “PNWER is an important forum to ensure B.C.’s voice is heard and to find common ground with our neighbours on issues that impact us all, whether it’s the impact of border security changes or the potential for more open trade.”

The Premier’s representative to PNWER, van Dongen was also appointed PNWER vice-president for Canada at last year’s annual summit. At this year’s summit, van Dongen will address B.C. priorities, including:

- Ensuring borders remain open and secure and promoting the free flow of legitimate trade and travel;
- Improving access for B.C. and western Canadian goods and services to markets in the U.S., particularly agricultural and forestry products;
- Generating support for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games;
- Advancing the development of alternative and clean energy resources such as wind, bio-fuels, ocean tides and waves, solar, geothermal, hydrogen fuel cells, and small hydro; and
- Promoting B.C.’s role as an Asia-Pacific gateway for the Pacific Northwest region.

“British Columbia has been and will continue to be a major player in our region,” said State Rep. Glenn Anderson (R-WA), President of PNWER. “Working with our neighbours, our goal is to increase regional economic opportunities, reduce the barriers to trade and highlight the competitive advantages we share in the Pacific Northwest. We have much to gain from working together. The strong bilateral relationship between British Columbia and Washington State is definitely a foundation of this regional partnership.”

Minister van Dongen will be chairing a roundtable discussion on border security and public safety with federal Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and United States Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff on Tuesday, July 18.

Founded in 1991, PNWER is a public-private bipartisan partnership whose members include B.C., Alberta, Yukon, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. PNWER's annual summits attract approximately 400 participants, including ministers and legislators from member jurisdictions, business organizations and private-sector industry associations, and senior officials from Canadian and U.S. governments.

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