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US SENATORS EXAMINE CLIMATE CHANGE IN YUKON, CANADA

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon government welcomed four United States senators on their way to Alaska as part of a trip to witness first-hand the effects of climate change in the North.

“The senators recognize that the Yukon and other northern regions already see the effects of climate change,” Yukon Premier Dennis Fentie said. “While they were here, we were able to show them those direct effects on our people, our environment and our economy.”

Led by Senator John McCain (R–Ariz.), Senators Susan Collins (R–Me.), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D–N.Y.) and Lindsey Graham (R–S.C.) spent today viewing the impacts of climate change on the Yukon.

The senators flew by helicopter over the Friday/Alligator ice patch. Ice patch melting, due to global warming, has revealed a large quantity of hunting artifacts, biological specimens and other sources of paleo-environmental information.

They also toured the spruce bark beetle-infested areas of the Kluane region. Over 400,000 hectares have been affected by the spruce beetle infestation – the largest outbreak ever to affect Canadian trees. Warmer winters attributed to climate change have increased the survival rate of the beetle, increasing its population. Timber that has been infested dies and becomes extremely dry, losing its economic value and becoming a serious fire hazard.

To conclude their trip, the senators touched down in the traditional fishing camp of Klukshu Village to witness the salmon run and speak with First Nation youth and Elders about climate change impacts in their traditional territory.

The senators also met privately with Premier Fentie to discuss the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the changing northern climate.

“This was an important meeting for Yukon. We are committed to working with First Nation, local, national and international governments to address the impacts of global climate change on the Yukon’s environment, our people and our way of life,” Fentie added.

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