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SUCCESSFUL FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL JUSTICE MEETING

WHITEHORSE – Justice Minister John Edzerza has asked for the support of his federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to address aboriginal justice issues at the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice held in Whitehorse, Nov. 7-9.

“With a combined commitment from all levels of government and aboriginal leaders nationally, real progress can be made to address the underlying causes that tend to bring aboriginal people before the law,” Edzerza said.

Ministers agreed that further work in this area will be guided by efforts already underway and would be coordinated with the First Ministers Conference on Aboriginal Issues being held later this month.

Yukon representatives provided a presentation on the Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court. Minister Edzerza was pleased to convey to other jurisdictions the success of the DVTO in responding to the harmful effects of family violence.

On the issue of the illegal use of guns, ministers will undertake a further review of proposals with respect to *Criminal Code* violations where guns are used in the commission of a crime or are smuggled into the country illegally. Alberta and the three Northern territories indicated their conditional support if the legislative amendments do not target non-compliance with the federal gun registry.

Ministers acknowledged the significant step taken with the recent introduction of Bill C-70, which addresses concerns about limiting the use of conditional sentences for serious and violent offences.

Other issues discussed by ministers at the meeting this week included organized crime, drugs, and legal aid.

The Whitehorse meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Anne McLellan; Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Irwin Cotler; and Yukon Justice Minister, John Edzerza.

– 30 –

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