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**KENYON TAKES YUKON ISSUES TO FEDERAL MINISTERS**

WHITEHORSE – Economic Development Minister Jim Kenyon met with seven federal ministers and representatives from nearly a dozen departments in Ottawa this week to advance a number of issues of importance to Yukoners.

Kenyon was part of a delegation of officers from the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, (PNWER) which traveled to Ottawa for a series of meetings over three days. Kenyon is one of two vice-presidents of PNWER, which is a partnership of Yukon, Alberta, British Columbia and the American states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Its role is to foster sustainable economic development throughout the Pacific Northwest region.

“This was an excellent opportunity for us to raise issues of importance with the new federal ministers that will have an impact on Yukoners, as well as our partners throughout the northwest,” Kenyon said. “For us to meet with this many federal ministers in such a short time is unprecedented and I am extremely encouraged by the open, frank discussions and the interest all of them showed in our issues and concerns.”

One of the key issues raised throughout the meetings was the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which would have seen travelers from Canada or Mexico entering the US by air or sea to have a passport or other secure travel document as of Dec. 31 of this year, and travelers entering by land to do the same by December 31, 2007.

The U.S. Senate approved an amendment Wednesday to delay these new requirements for the next 17 months, a development welcomed by PNWER, which has raised concerns about the affect this will have on tourism and trading and economic relationships.

"This will mitigate our concerns for a reprieve period, while we and our counterparts across the country continue to lobby for concessions on cross-border identification," Kenyon said. "This is a major issue for Yukon and in all of the discussions we had this week we were able to stress how this will have a real affect on us. Canada seems to be listening and we are confident our concerns will be addressed."

Other issues discussed included skills shortages and workforce training, trade relations, the Alaska Highway Pipeline, the 2010 Olympics, and energy planning initiatives, among others.

Kenyon also met with Brian Jean, parliamentary secretary to Transport Canada Minister Lawrence Cannon, to give him a briefing on the Alaska-Canada rail link feasibility study and its progress. Mr. Jean has invited Minister Kenyon to return to Ottawa in July to brief him on the results of the completed study.

The group met with:

- David Emerson, minister of International Trade and the minister responsible for the Pacific Gateway and the 2010 Olympics;
- Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness;
- Carol Skelton, Minister of Western Economic Diversification;
- Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources Canada;
- Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture;
- Monte Solberg, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The group also met with deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers from the Privy Council Office, Foreign Affairs, Canada Border Services Agency, Industry Canada and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, as well as US Deputy Chief of Mission John Dickson, Canada Border Services Agency President Alain Jolicoeur and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister Stephen Rigby.

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