

Final Report

Mission to Pacific North West Economic Region (PNWER)

Annual Summit, Seattle, WA

July 14-18, 2005



Overview:

The Honourable Rob Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and PNWER's 2004-05 President, led a mission to Seattle, Washington to chair the PNWER Annual Summit July 14-18, 2005. The Alberta delegation, which also included the Honourable Clint Dunford, Minister of Economic Development; the Honourable Mike Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment; Mel Knight, MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky; and Richard Marz, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, played prominent roles in chairing PNWER working groups.

Through PNWER's working group activities, action items and resolutions, Minister Renner and his colleagues were able to oversee and contribute to the promotion of greater regional cooperation between governments and business, and the enhancement of the region's global competitiveness, economic development, security, and environment.

Approximately 500 delegates attended the Annual Summit, including elected officials, and private and public sector representatives from the PNWER jurisdictions of Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska.

The mission achieved the following objectives:

Mission Objectives:

- Advise U.S. decision-makers of Alberta's strong support for a closer relationship between Canada and the United States, including greater economic integration.
- Contribute to efforts aimed at a regional approach to increasing government and business ties.
- Offer and share Alberta's expertise and positions on various issues in agriculture, border issues, energy, environment, health care, emergency management, workforce development, transportation, and sustainable development.
- Develop meaningful resolutions and action items to enhance regional cooperation on issues of importance to Alberta.
- Express Alberta's interest in hosting the 2006 Annual Summit in Edmonton.

Results:

July 14

Following PNWER executive meetings, the delegation, led by Minister Renner, met with various other delegates to discuss upcoming priorities for the Annual Summit at a reception hosted by the Canadian Consulate in Seattle. Deputy Prime Minister Anne McClellan was the guest of honour and spoke at the reception, citing the value of PNWER, especially with regard to security and emergency management preparedness.

July 15

Members of the delegation attended working group seminars to begin discussion on producing action items for final resolutions. During these working group sessions, members of the delegation were able to identify key areas where regional governments and the private sector could collaborate more effectively.

Alberta Minister Clint Dunford, who was Co-Chair of the Trade and Economic Development working group, facilitated discussions surrounding the need to facilitate the movement of standard equipment and trained staff across the U.S. border. Alberta was successful in prompting PNWER to continue to work with the U.S. and Canadian federal governments, and other relevant agencies and jurisdictional regions to determine strategies regarding the challenges surrounding this issue.

Mel Knight, Alberta MLA, Chair of the Energy I working group, and Alberta's Washington Office representative Murray Smith, led the development of PNWER's Bi-National Regional Energy Planning Initiative. Through their efforts, the Energy working group was able to develop a comprehensive plan to address several issues including:

- Data sharing on resource availability – supply / demand of gas, petroleum, electricity
- Analysis of the feasibility of moving megawatts vs. BTU's
- Least cost corridor planning
- Unified permitting across jurisdictions

July 16

Richard Marz, Alberta MLA, co-chaired the Agriculture working group in which several issues, including cattle and beef trade, and animal ID issues were addressed. Richard Marz led the working group in developing action items which included the following resolution on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE):

“That PNWER encourage the exchange of information between appropriate contacts on the issue of disposal of Specified Risk Materials and its impact on rendering capacity.”

MLA Marz reiterated Alberta's position calling on the federal governments of both countries to work to fully normalize cattle and beef trade between Canada and the U.S. as soon as possible. This position was later formally adopted by a PNWER commitment to work together as a regional entity to accomplish the full normalization of cattle and beef trade.

July 17

Alberta Minister Mike Cardinal, Co-Chair of the Workforce Development working group, outlined Alberta's position on implementing an integrated approach to address Alberta's skilled labour shortage and worker mobility between borders. The following action items were adopted:

- States, provinces and educational entities within the PNWER region will identify sectors and industries with a critical shortage of skilled workers, and determine where educational systems may need to refocus priorities. Emphasis will be on responding to these needs while maximizing current regional strengths and best practices to address identified weaknesses.

- PNWER will work with the Canadian and U.S. state/provincial and federal governments, as well as any other relevant agencies, to identify future deficiencies in skilled workers and address barriers to the movement of workers across borders and investigate possible solutions.
- PNWER will host a conference before the end of 2006 to identify impediments to aboriginal peoples entering the workforce and measures to be taken to overcome these obstacles. PNWER will consider expanding this conference to address questions raised in relation to mobility of workers and educational requirements to address regional industry needs.

July 18

As outgoing-President of PNWER, Minister Renner chaired an Executive meeting at the end of the Annual Summit to discuss administrative issues relative to the organization. During this meeting, Minister Renner received the endorsement of the PNWER Executive to hold the 2006 Annual Summit in Edmonton.

Delegation

- Honourable Rob Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs
- Honourable Mike Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment
- Honourable Clint Dunford, Minister of Economic Development
- Richard Marz, MLA, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills
- Mel Knight, MLA, Grande Prairie-Smoky
- Donna Ballard, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment