

**Northern Development Ministers' Forum
The Pas, Manitoba - September 14-16, 2005**

**Northern Development Ministers Meet to Discuss
Issues Facing the North**

Opaskwayak Cree Nation, The Pas, Manitoba (September 16, 2005) – Ministers of Northern Development Forum met in The Pas, Manitoba this week for their annual two-day meeting. The forum discussed a variety of issues including this year's theme *Education, Training and Employment*.

The Northern Development Ministers Forum promotes the diverse interests of northerners and the accomplishments, contributions and potential within northern jurisdictions of Canada.

Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Oscar Lathlin chaired the forum. "It was a great pleasure for me to host the annual forum at Opaskwayak Cree Nation, my home community, and to showcase the region and Northern Manitoba hospitality to representatives from all jurisdictions" Minister Lathlin stated.

Federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Andy Scott spoke on federal priorities at this year's forum. "I was pleased to meet and speak with such a wide range of interesting and talented people. *Education, Training and Employment* is a key priority for northerners as it is for Indian and Northern Affairs. This meeting was very much in step with the reality of the North and I believe its importance will increase over the coming years, as the region becomes a stronger voice in the Canadian landscape."

Ongoing projects related to northern innovation, strategies to maximize the local benefits of major development projects, enhancing the public awareness of northern concerns, increasing investments in transportation infrastructure, and development of a forum website were also discussed.

Ministers also heard presentations on Manitoba's Arctic Bridge Project, International Polar Year, and traditional knowledge consultations in Labrador.

The 2006 forum will be held in the Yukon with the theme *Knowledge North* which will focus on improving access to information about the economic capacity and the physical and social resources of the North.

Observations by Ministers in Attendance

Quebec Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Geoffrey Kelley, on behalf of the Minister of Municipal and Regional Affairs, madame Nathalie Normandeau, said, "Our discussions helped us identify the main issues related to Northern development and find innovative, concrete solutions that can influence government actions."

British Columbia MLA Dennis MacKAY, speaking on behalf of Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen said, "Continued development is vital to the economic sustainability of Canada's northern communities. British Columbia is pleased to join our fellow provinces and territories in working to find new opportunities for the North. By working together, we are able to establish and share ideas, experiences and best practices that will benefit all northern Canadians. The results of the discussions we've had this week will assist in developing a strategy to maximize the economic and social benefits for northern infrastructure projects."

Saskatchewan Northern Affairs Minister, Buckley Belanger said, "The Forum allows northern Ministers to share knowledge and best practices. We will continue to work together to maximize for northerners the benefits of economic projects and continue to emphasize the importance of transportation to further northern development."

Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister, Pearl Calahasen said, "I am encouraged by the foresight and positive steps we have taken in our discussions held here and the action plans to advance key initiatives in order to tackle issues facing Northerners. Forums like these go a long way in our goal to better the lives of northern people."

Newfoundland and Labrador's Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Tom Rideout said, "I am very pleased with the results of the Recruitment and Retention priority project, which was led by our jurisdiction. Recruitment and retention issues in Canada's northern regions can be addressed with increased local training, which creates higher skills capacity, particularly for Aboriginal communities. It is good to see the progression of this issue with the Education, Training and Employment project."

Yukon Economic Development Minister, Jim Kenyon noted, "Yukon is looking forward to welcoming the members of the Forum to our Territory in 2006. We are planning a special priority project called "Knowledge North" which will build on the excellent work already completed to enhance awareness of the contributions of the North by utilizing an innovative way to present strategic economic information. We will build on the Forum's work on several projects including measuring economic impacts of major projects. I hope by collaborating in this way with all the jurisdictions we can continue to develop the potential of the North for the benefit of Northerners."

Northwest Territories Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Brendan Bell noted, "One of the major challenges facing the North is public awareness of the contribution of northerners to Canada and its vast economic potential."

Nunavut Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Peter Kilabuk said, "It has been a great pleasure for me to be able to return to the Northern Development Ministers' Forum. I was privileged to be part of the first Northern Development Ministers' Conference in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2000. In the past five years we have seen great progress in advancing the Northern agenda, and in raising awareness in Canada of the needs of our people, and of the contribution we make to the country as a whole."

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