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Northern economy talks a draw



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Colin Smith of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of B.C., left, Margaret Anne Hodges of the association's Saskatchewan chapter, Premier Bob McLeod and the Saskatchewan association's executive director Dennis Paddock pose for a photo at a dinner held on Monday at the Museum Cafe as part of the winter meeting for the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region.

Winter meeting of Pacific NorthWest Economic Region comes to the city for first time

by Karen K. Ho

Northern News Services

Business leaders from Canada and the U.S. who attended a conference in Yellowknife this week may be from all across the continent but they all have one thing in common: direct links to Northern business.

This week almost 100 MLAs, state legislators, diplomats and business leaders are gathering in Yellowknife for the winter meeting of the Pacific NorthWest Economic

Region (PNWER).

"I thought it was important to come to this meeting," said Alaska state congressional representative Bob Herron, who is chair of PNWER's

Arctic Caucus. "Though I was surprised, it's not that cold here."

The non-profit group consists of members from 10 states, provinces and territories in Canada and the United States.

"We may not share the same political views at all but

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BUSINESS Briefs

with Karen K. Ho

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**CDETNO goes to Europe**

This week the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CDETNO) and the GNWT will be in Paris, France, and Brussels, Belgium, from Tuesday to Saturday.

The two groups will be there on behalf of programs administered by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The hope is to assist employers in recruiting and retaining skilled foreign nationals.

This is the ninth consecutive year CDETNO will attend this event in Europe.

Yk Geoscience Forum approaching

The Yellowknife Geoscience Forum will take place next week.

According to the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, almost 600 are expected to attend the event taking place from Tuesday to Thursday at the Ed Jeske Arena.

Almost 100 exhibitors have registered for the trade show and more than 125 presenters will be speaking on topics including geoscience, exploration, diamonds, petroleum, environmental monitoring, wildlife, infrastructure and innovation.

The keynote lecture will be given by Thomas Stachel from the University of Alberta on diamond formations in the Earth's mantle.

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Karen K. Ho/NNSL photo

A&W BACK TO BUSINESS

Owner Todd Stewart stands in his newly renovated A&W restaurant on 50 Avenue. Stewart said he knew of the impending renovation for about a year. The company's head office decided its latest rebrand would break away from the classic orange and brown motif to include other colours. All A&W restaurants across the country will also undergo the change. Stewart said it took contractor Miramichi Builders eight days to finish the project which included new counters, paint, wall panels, cabinets and furniture. The shift followed the restaurant's kitchen renovation which was completed last year. The owner did not disclose how much either cost except to describe it as "substantial." Stewart has been the owner of the A&W Yellowknife location for the past six years and his business partner is Randy Caines.

Conference brings Northerners together

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all that is put aside at these PNWER meetings," said MLA Scott Fraser, a member of the B.C. NDP, said during his remarks at the Museum Cafe on Monday. "We heard about the commonalities that are important to all of us and it's way more than the differences that separate us."

This is the first time Yellowknife and the NWT have hosted one of PNWER's meetings which saw the organization and the GNWT present two events over three days this week: the legislative leadership academy from Sunday to Monday and the economy leadership forum from Monday to Tuesday.

Industry, Tourism and Investment Minister David Ramsay said the winter meeting in Yellowknife was a real dream for both himself and Premier Bob McLeod.

"It was a honour to serve as the first president (of the organization) from the Northwest Territories," he said, having been elected to the position in July 2014. Idaho State Sen. Curt McKenzie has since assumed the role.

Ramsay called the members of PNWER a family that welcomed the territory.

"We can all benefit from each other and the messages and experiences each other has," he added.

Herron told *Yellowknifer* it was important for him to attend not just because the group's immediate past president is Ramsay but because the territory has similar challenges to Alaska related to resource development.

"Although the NWT has an unbelievable future with its diamond mines. It has a lot of resources that are stranded. (It's) tough to find investors and to get those resources to market," he said during a dinner held at the Museum Cafe on Monday.

Herron, who resides in the western Alaska town of Bethel which is populated by 6,080 people, said the two jurisdictions share many of the concerns regarding its smaller, northern communities.

"How can they live, breathe, strive so that their residents can enjoy all the same things that other people in other states and provinces expect and enjoy as well," he said. "It's about our future and it's important these jurisdictions continue to work together so that the people, for eons, have a common link. Just

because there's borders on the map doesn't mean that we can't work together to try and figure out those problems."

Herron said while Alaska's population was 735,000 people, there were still parallels in terms of its workforce.

In the region he resides in, the Yukon Kukokwim Delta, he told *Yellowknifer* there are 33 villages, a population of 17,775 people and almost 90 per cent of them are Alaska Native.

"I live in a community that's about 50/50," he said, adding he's spent his entire adult life there, and that his children and grandchildren are Alaska Native as well.

Herron said he understands the challenges that are going on in the Northwest Territories from both its economy and its workforce.

"Alaska has been a boom-bust territory since 1867," he said. "We do get a lot of people who come up from the lower 48."

In Alaska, "southerners" are called "outsiders" but Herron said the focus now in his territory is to grow its own educated population, rather than continue to see a flow of temporary residents who only stay for one to five years.

"How can you empower the people because those First Nations (residents) are going to stay there?" he said. "A lot of these people can never leave even if they wanted to."

Herron cited his experi-

ence of being asked about the rural and urban divide. He explained it's not that simple in his state either, even with the attraction of a big city like Anchorage with its population of 300,950.

"My kids have jobs, my grandkids are going to school there, I've bought and sold businesses, I have my snow machine, my boat, my cabin," he said. "You can't just... leave."



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