**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM IN VICTORIA, B.C. NOV 5-7**

Victoria, B.C. −  More than 125 state and provincial legislators and business leaders from the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada will convene at the Economic Leadership Forum, Nov. 5-7 in Victoria to discuss regional economic issues, support international trade and build cross-border cooperation.

The Forum will begin with a Legislative Academy on Sunday at the Empress Hotel focusing on a discussion of the practical differences between the parliamentary and U.S. systems of government and will move on Monday into the critical issue of the day, **NAFTA, Modernization, or Not at All?**  Delegates will hear from **Dan Ujczo, a Canada-U.S. law specialist** on the implications of a world without NAFTA, and discuss what can be done to support the modernization effort, as well as from **Brandon Lee, Canada’s new Consul General for the Pacific Northwest.**

The forum is presented by the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), a public/private non-profit chartered by five states, three provinces and two territories in 1991. The mission of PNWER is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success"; and serve as a conduit to exchange information. British Columbia has been a founding member of PNWER since 1991.

Delegates will address pressing issues to B.C. and the region, including the impacts of natural disasters this year and how these can be mitigated, how as a region we can work together to mitigate wildfires and learn from this year’s fire season, as well as the Fort McMurray fires last year in Alberta. The group will also focus on how to implement lessons learned from the hurricane season and how to ‘design for resilience’ with **Christine Arthurs, Director of Resilience and Infrastructure, City of Calgary**, and **David McGown, Senior Vice President, Strategic Initiatives, Insurance Bureau of Canada. Andrew Pape-Salmon, B.C.’s Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**,will speak about a ‘Roadmap to Ultra-Low Energy, Resilient Buildings in the Pacific Northwest.’

On Tuesday, **Alex Alben, Chief Privacy Officer for Washington State** will join B.C.’s **Drew McArthur, Acting Privacy Commissioner for B.C.** to discuss key strategies to ensure privacy of public data, and prevent cyber breaches like the Equifax breach which put millions of U.S. records at risk.

Delegates will be invited to tour Victoria’s working harbour and will hear from **Victoria** **Mayor Lisa Helps**, **Randy Wright (Harbour Air)** and **Todd Banks (Kenmore Air),** **Ryan Malane, Blackball ferries and Tobias Haack, Victoria Clipper**; **Alex Rueben, SkillSource BC** on expanding marine trades; **Joseph O’Rourke, Seaspan Victoria Shipyards**; **Alois Schoneneberger, Harbour Master Transport Canada**; and **Gary Leibel**, with Ralmax Group during a two-hour boat trip around the harbour.

The Tourism session will highlight the economic impact of the cruise industry; a presentation by **Paul Nursey, CEO of Tourism Victoria**, and a discussion on the ‘Nerd Bird’ **Harbour-to-Harbour air service between Vancouver and Seattle.**

**Charles Knutson from the Office of Washington Governor Jay Inslee** will discuss the long-term vision for ultra-high speed rail; and there will be a session on Automated, Connected Electric Share (ACES) Vehicles and a plan for an I-5 Corridor between Seattle and Vancouver with two specialists **Scott Kuznicki, Director Safety and Mobility Solutions, Transpo Group**; and **Anthony Harrison, Director Public Policy with ChargePoint.**

Vancouver International Airport will be also on the agenda, with technology solutions to speed up border clearances while enhancing security with **Gerry Bruno, YVR**; and **Solomon Wong, InterVistas.**

The Innovation session will highlight **Kate Moran, Director of Ocean Networks Canada** from the University of Victoria, and **Ross Drake, CEO of Pyrus Medical**, a Seattle technology company that allows surgeons to use virtual reality to perform delicate operations in real time.

For more information, visit www.pnwer.org/2017-economic-leadership-forum.

The meeting is free and open to accredited media. Download the attached media accreditation form at [bit.ly/pnwermedia](http://www.pnwer.org/uploads/2/3/2/9/23295822/pnwer_2017_winter_mtg_media_accreditation_form.docx) and return it to Brandon@pnwer.org or bring it to the PNWER Registration Desk at Empress Hotel outside of Rattenbury Room lower level.