



U.S. & Canada Leaders Promote Trade, Innovation, and Regional Collaboration at the 2019 PNWER Economic Leadership Forum

**“Friendship, cooperation, and problem solving-that’s what it’s all about!”
-PNWER President, MT State Senator Mike Cuffe.**

Legislators from five Pacific Northwest states and three Western Canadian provinces met in Seattle, WA, for a three day meeting focused on Trade, the Columbia River Treaty, Innovation, PNW Space Cluster, Autonomous Vehicles, 5G Networks, Smart Grid Technologies, Maritime Industries, and Enhanced Border Facilitation.

Washington State Representative Gael Tarleton, Vice President of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) said, “What tied all these important issues together for me is the incredible innovation happening in the Pacific Northwest, and the collaboration that is taking place across our air, land, and sea borders.”

Sunday, November 17

The 2019 PNWER Economic Leadership Forum began the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 17 with a Executive Committee and Delegate Council Meeting to discuss and decide on the priorities and strategies for PNWER in the upcoming year.



***Click on the session titles below to view the speakers for each session.**

[What ties us together? Celebrating the common bonds in PNWER](#)



"When states and provinces work together, we all succeed." The Hon. Katrine Conroy, B.C. Minister Responsible for the Columbia River Treaty, opened the Forum with a keynote address that included an update on the Columbia River Treaty and the community outreach that is happening in B.C. Her address was followed by tabletop discussions with delegates on the Columbia River Treaty.

The opening banquet also featured remarks from PNWER President, MT State Sen. Mike Cuffe; Robert Kerr, Consul at the Consulate General of Canada in Seattle; and Katherine Dhanani, Consul General of the U.S. in Vancouver.

[View TVW's recording of the Opening Banquet.](#)

Monday, November 18

[Accelerating the Pacific Northwest Economy through Innovation](#)

Former Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire kicked off the first full day of the Forum with an address showcasing the Cascadia Innovation Corridor Partnership. Delegates were called on to support the "Mega Region" and the need for facilitating strategies that accelerate the Pacific Northwest economy. Gregoire defined the region to Vancouver, BC; Seattle,

WA; and Portland, OR, but was open to collaborating the greater PNWER jurisdictions. Gregoire called on elected officials to be engaged and get involved to “Help Invent Tomorrow Together,” the bi-line of the Cascadia Innovation Corridor. She also called on officials to be proactively looking at workforce, transportation, and housing challenges and stressed that the region can benefit economically from collaborating and cooperating together.



Gregoire finished her address by sending out a call to action to PNWER delegates, "If we engage and work together, there is nothing we can't do. We have the opportunity to invent tomorrow today together."

Irene Plenefisch, Government Affairs Director for Microsoft, moderated a discussion with Gregoire and PNWER delegates.

[Innovation Ecosystems Leading to Economic Growth](#)



Following the Cascadia Innovation Corridor keynote, delegates heard from a panel of experts on innovation policy for the mega region. Nirav Desai, Senior Partner at Moonbeam, moderated a panel of experts that included Jaime Fitzgibbons, Founder and CEO, Ren.ai.ssance Insights; Bill Tam, Vice President, Business Development, Canada's Digital

Technology Supercluster; and Jennifer Fox, Director, Chief of Staff, Autodesk.

Panelists were asked if geography matters in fostering economic development in the region. Fitzgibbon stated, "It matters a lot, because of the innovation ecosystem. You must have investors, early adopters, and innovators. When they get together, they can share and pivot ideas off of each other and learn from each other. The growth and center of gravity is there." Tam noted the importance of providing the pathways to not only help industries adapt their operations to the digital realities but also to ensure that we are building the trained workforce needed for the future. Fox supported this theme by highlighting the wearables and life science cluster in sports apparel that exist in the Portland area. Advances in technology and innovation are transforming incumbent industries that traditionally have not been considered high-tech sectors or utilized technology for everyday consumer uses.

[Smart Grids](#)

Moderated by Brian Young, Director of Economic Development, Clean Tech Sector, Washington Department of Commerce, the Smart Grid session explored policy developments, the changing role of utilities, and new technologies that will transform the way electrical grids work. Expert panelists Karen Studarus, Electricity Infrastructure Group, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and Jason Zyskowski, Senior Manager, Transmission & Distribution, Snohomish County PUD, spoke to the advances in low emission technology incorporation into the grid to ensure low-cost energy reliability to manufacturers and consumers.



The future demands for low to zero emissions while maintaining the current reliability in the energy system is critical to the economic livelihoods of the people and industry in the region. Studarus stressed that the region must continue to invest in research to support future needs and challenges in the energy sector. Studarus went on to say we can lead the nation and the world in clean energy reliability if we get it right. Zyskowski showcased real world operations in Snohomish County that utilize new technologies that are providing low-cost energy reliability.

[Out of this World: the Emerging Space Cluster in the PNW](#)



Rounding out the innovation showcase, delegates learned about the Space Sector in the Puget Sound from a panel of industry experts. Washington State has one of the largest Space clusters in North America. Space as a sector, has changed from primarily federal programs to a majority of private industry players. Emily Wittman, President & CEO, Aerospace Futures

Alliance and Washington State Space Coalition, moderated the panel with Curt Blake, CEO, Spaceflight Industries; Ken Young, General Manager, Aerojet Rocketdyne; and Roger Myers, President-elect, WA State Academy of Sciences.

Myers stated that the U.S. is seeing a huge transition from government-led programs because the barriers to entry in the industry currently requires much less capital. Workforce and Transportation challenges were all highlighted as limiting factors that are hindering the growth of the sector in the region. Wittman went on to stress that workforce in the industry is not limited to individuals with advanced science and mathematics degrees. Workforce development can happen in high school and at the community college level of education. Many jobs in the space industry can be obtained without an advanced degree.

Transportation of Tomorrow

Bruce Agnew, ACES Northwest Network, moderated the afternoon session on Autonomous, Connected, Electric, and Shared mobility which featured Tom Alberg, Madrona Venture Group; Bryan Mistele, INRIX; Fran Dougherty, Microsoft Automotive; and Jennifer Harper, Energy Northwest. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure was a critical piece of this session, as speaker Jennifer Harper from Energy Northwest explained how energy companies in eastern Washington and smaller communities were working to install charging stations for the benefit of both local residents and out-of-town visitors. "There was a lot of interest from those communities to install fast-charging infrastructure and apply for state grant funding," said Harper.



Autonomous vehicles were a dominant topic of conversation, with speakers Alberg, Mistele, and Dougherty discussing different aspects of autonomous vehicles. Alberg and Mistele spoke to the practical applications of autonomous vehicles, highlighting the ways that ACES "advanced together can save lives, decrease traffic congestion, reduce carbon and increase productivity for employers and employees." Alberg was initial investor in Amazon and just retired after 23 years on the Board. Dougherty helped participants understand how Microsoft was working to create foundational code that could be used in all autonomous vehicles, allowing car manufacturers to then customize the final 25%. This foundational code would allow vehicles to communicate better, while still allowing manufacturers to maintain branding and individuality.

Smarter Regions for the Future



The technology used in autonomous vehicles will increasingly rely on 5G networks, which were discussed at length during the session moderated by Washington State Representative Vandana Slatter. Azmeena Hasham of Verizon explained the ways that 5G networks will build off of existing 4G networks - not replace them - and how moving to 5G is necessary to combat the increased connectivity we are

experiencing in our daily lives. Michael Boyle from the Westin Building Exchange reiterated this point, informing delegates that the fiber optic cables needed to transmit data are at maximum capacity, and that taking advantage of short-wave technology can alleviate some of this burden.

Ultimately, with 5G and autonomous vehicle technology and everything in between, the Pacific Northwest has the knowledge, the skilled workforce, and the know-how to push forward and adopt these innovations. According to Kim Zentz, CEO of Urbanova in Spokane, adoption of these technologies has the potential to make life better for people. "We will be successful when we have healthier citizens, safer neighborhoods, smarter infrastructure, more sustainable environment, and a stronger economy," Zentz says, and 5G is an important tool in reaching these goals.

Tuesday, November 19

What's the Deal with Trade?

Tuesday morning opened with a panel of experts on trade featuring Lori Otto Punke, Washington Council on International Trade; Maria Ellis, Pacific Northwest International Trade Association; Robert Hamilton, WA Department of Commerce; and moderated by Edward Alden, Council on Foreign Relations. The panelists discussed and answered delegates questions on topics ranging from the trade war with China to the importance of trade with Canada and Mexico and the need to ratify USMCA to the serious impact that tariffs have had on state and regional businesses from manufacturing to agriculture.



It was noted by Maria Ellis that, "Our economy has shifted...we need to have agreements that are more reflective of our new realities." Lori Otto Punke said, "What was once viewed as just a trade issue is now growing beyond that discussion and bleeding over into the national security discussion and the rules and regulations discussion. The issues are getting harder and more complex."

The U.S. and Canada have the largest trading relationship in the world. In the Pacific Northwest, this trading partnership is particularly important. U.S.-Canada two-way trade is valued at over \$541 billion USD (\$630 billion CAD) annually, according to 2017 numbers. The Pacific Northwest accounts for about \$22.6 billion USD (\$29 billion CAD) of this two-way trade.

Working Waterfront and Maritime Innovation Tour

After the trade plenary, delegates boarded an Argosy Cruise for a two-hour maritime tour around Elliot Bay highlighting Seattle's working waterfront. The working waterfront tour explored the multi-sector dynamics of the maritime industry and the tremendous impact of maritime on the region's economy and featured speakers from industries and the government including the Port of Seattle, the U.S. Coast Guard, Vigor shipyards, the

Washington State ferry system, the Pacific fishing fleet homeport, and the cruise lines.
[\[Click here to see full list of speakers\]](#)

Seattle's maritime sector has ties and linkages to the entire Pacific Northwest region and beyond. Several speakers on the tour highlighted the many interconnected industries of Seattle's vibrant waterfront, emphasizing the important economic benefit that the waterfront provides to the regional economy, including fishing, manufacturing, tourism and shipping. For example, a recent report from the Seattle Metro Chamber found that business with Alaska accounts for 113,000 jobs in the Puget Sound region and generates \$6.2 billion in wages. The Seattle waterfront serves as a gateway to the world for the rest of the region, allowing commodities from the inland Pacific Northwest to access key markets in Asia and beyond.



[Roundtable of Upcoming Legislative Sessions](#)

Delegates arrived back from the port tour to a luncheon roundtable moderated by Tom Banse, KUOW News, with words from PNWER leadership on the main issues expected in their respective jurisdiction's upcoming legislative sessions. The roundtable featured WA Rep. Gael Tarleton, ID Sen. Chuck



Winder, AK Sen. Mia Costello, AB MLA Richard Gotfried, and SK MLA Larry Doke.

Building the Border of the Future

Following the legislative roundtable, the discussion turned to the border. The afternoon session featured Solomo Wong, InterVISTAS; Michael Freeman, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Jason Beloso, WA State Department of Transportation; Ryan Malane, Black Ball Ferry Line; and moderated by Laurie Trautman, Border Policy Research Institute. The discussion focused on new innovation and technology at the land, marine, and rail ports of entry on the northern border.



Several ports of entry on the WA-BC border are poised to become the first participants in the newly adopted Land, Marine, Rail and Air Agreement on preclearance between the US and Canada which will clear passengers in Canada prior to departure by ferry in Victoria and rail in Vancouver. This new approach will improve security and speed processing of passengers by eliminating wait times when arriving in the United States.

Also discussed was a proposed new pilot focused on reducing wait times for commercial freight transport on the land border at the Pacific Highway border crossing. The proposed pilot is modeled after the successful program in the Buffalo-Niagara region called PreArrival Readiness Evaluation (PARE) program and will optimize traffic flow and greatly speed the processing time for each truck and driver and, in turn, will reduce wait times.

What's All the Buzz About? The Future of Drones

The Forum's program concluded with a robust look at the future of drones and the role that they can play in different aspects of our world. Drones are being utilized in ways that would



seem impossible just a few years ago. The session was moderated by Charlton Evans, End State Solutions, and featured Tom Hagen, AUVSI-Cascade Chapter; Bryan Norton, City of Boise; and Douglas Spotted Eagle, Sundance Media Group.

The manufacturing and innovative drone technologies happening right here in the Pacific Northwest gives us the chance to be a world leader on drones. This is a fast-evolving industry, and drones are being used to mitigate disasters, inspect critical

infrastructure, increase public safety, and more. However, the speakers identified a major issue to the opportunities and effective use of drones which is misinformation and false perceptions regarding the legality and uses of this technology.

Tom Hagen said, "We need more informed legislators, homeowners, drone users, and others. We need laws that allow the technology to work, but we need to work on education. PNWER is one way to do this educational outreach & bridge this gap."

Douglas Spotted Eagle stated, "Technology is not to be afraid of. It is to be understood."

Closing Reception at the Amazon Spheres

The 2019 PNWER Economic Leadership Forum closed with a reception at the Amazon Spheres. Delegates had the chance to explore this unique Seattle attraction which contains more than 40,000 plants from the cloud forest regions of over 30 countries.





[View Speaker Presentations](#)

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