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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2005OTP0039-000303  
March 18, 2005

Government of British Columbia  
Government of Alberta

### **B.C. AND ALBERTA WORK TOGETHER ON PORTS, PINE-BEETLE**

CRANBROOK – A joint cabinet meeting between the governments of British Columbia and Alberta has resulted in measures and funding to mitigate the impact of the mountain pine beetle and expand export gateways to Asia.

“B.C. and Alberta are two of the strongest economies in Canada and the decade ahead holds incredible potential for us to work together and build on that strength,” said B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell. “As the nation’s Pacific gateway, B.C. will play a defining role in shaping Canada’s access to the opportunities emerging in Asian markets. Those opportunities are not bound by provincial borders, and our efforts to capitalize on them should not be either. I applaud Premier Klein and his government for their ongoing willingness to work with B.C. in areas that benefit not just our two provinces but the entire nation.”

“Common sense co-operation between Alberta and British Columbia means more government efficiency, and savings for taxpayers and businesses in both provinces,” said Alberta Premier Ralph Klein. “I’m very pleased with the results of our third joint cabinet meeting. We have committed to working together to fight a pest threatening our forests, and making inroads into booming markets in Asia. We’ll co-operate to protect our northern water resources, help our athletes excel at the Olympics, and remove roadblocks to increase employment opportunities for our citizens.”

Alberta and B.C. have agreed to work together to establish new economic gateways that will allow access to vast and rapidly growing markets in China and other Asian countries. The provinces have also agreed to:

- Endorse the B.C. Ports Strategy and commit to move forward with implementation.
- Provide funding to support completion of a West Coast Container Super Port feasibility study by the end of March 2005.
- Develop a northern airports strategy.

The agreements reached at the meeting in Cranbrook, B.C. include:

- A Mountain Pine Beetle Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to address widespread damage by the mountain pine beetle in the Peace Region of B.C. A five-year renewable MOA has been signed to share a one-year cost of \$1.65 million for beetle control and mitigation. British Columbia will contribute \$900,000 and Alberta will contribute \$742,000. It is hoped that shared action between the two provinces will lead to more effective negotiations on the mountain pine beetle at the federal level.
- A Bilateral Water Management Negotiations Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will initiate and guide negotiation of a B.C.-Alberta bilateral water management agreement on how the provinces share and protect their common water resources.

- A 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games MOU that will assist the provinces in sharing Olympic and Paralympic training and competition facilities to develop high performance athletes and sport tourism initiatives.

Two additional MOUs were signed in advance of the meeting:

- An MOU to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices around labour market programming. This will improve services and employment opportunities for residents of each province who face barriers to employment.
- A five-year MOU between Alberta's Education Learning Resources Centre and the B.C. Ministry of Education and the Special Education Technology (SET-BC) program. The agreement affirms the interests of all partners to work together to explore opportunities to improve services to students with special needs from both provinces.

Premiers and ministers from both provinces also agreed to work together to proactively bring forward to the federal government provincial priorities that are of national importance such as transportation infrastructure.

The Premiers and ministers also received a progress report on activities since their last meeting in May of 2004, including:

- Harmonizing oil and gas rules and procedures to make them more consistent for industry in both provinces.
- Sharing resources and information to harmonize regulations to strengthen agriculture and address drought-related problems including smoothing the interprovincial movement of hay bales.
- Standardizing regulations – B.C. recently passed regulations to harmonize with Alberta on ozone depleting substances, special waste and deep well injection. Other opportunities to standardize regulations between provinces are being examined.
- Co-operating on public health emergencies, aboriginal health, and recruiting more internationally trained doctors licensed to practice medicine in both provinces in an effort to reduce the costs of healthcare in Alberta and B.C.
- Improving access to post-secondary – institutions in the two provinces are making it possible for more students to get the training they need closer to home.

The premiers and ministers also discussed possible long-term solutions to the softwood lumber dispute and further action on a comprehensive bilateral agreement on trade, investment and labour force movement between the two provinces.

Copies of the agreements are available on the B.C. government website at [www.gov.bc.ca/igrs](http://www.gov.bc.ca/igrs) or on the Alberta government website at [www.iir.gov.ab.ca](http://www.iir.gov.ab.ca).

2 backgrounder(s) attached.

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## BACKGROUND

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### **B.C. AND ALBERTA COMMIT TO FIGHT PINE BEETLE**

British Columbia and Alberta have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together and share costs in managing mountain pine beetle populations in B.C.'s Peace Forest District to minimize the potential for beetle infestations moving eastward across the border into forested areas of Alberta.

Together the provinces are committing \$1.65 million. British Columbia is investing \$908,000 this winter in fall-and-burn management strategies and ongoing monitoring of attacked trees in the southern half of the Peace Forest District. Alberta is providing \$742,000 (with industry, specifically Weyerhaeuser and Canfor, contributing \$250,000 to Alberta's total investment).

Eighty workers are carrying out fall-and-burn treatments in the Dawson Creek timber supply area, Canfor tree farm licence 48, and protected areas in the Peace Forest District.

The Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada is acting as the agent for Alberta in beetle management operations on the B.C. side of the border. FERIC is a private, non-profit research and development organization whose mandate is to improve Canadian forestry operations related to harvesting and transporting wood, and to grow trees within a framework of sustainable development.

B.C. and Alberta will annually develop a co-operative workplan to determine funding arrangements and the forestry techniques, methods and treatments to be completed each year for controlling and suppressing mountain pine beetle populations.

The Memorandum of Understanding is effective for five years and may be renewed for an additional five years by mutual agreement of the provinces.

B.C. Ministry of Forests' aerial overview surveys detected mountain pine beetle attack lightly scattered over 18,600 hectares of the Peace Forest District in 2004. Provincially the beetle affected about seven million hectares of British Columbia last year.

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### IMPROVING GATEWAYS TO ASIA

#### **B.C. Ports Strategy**

##### **Why we need a strategy**

- Projected growth in Asia-Pacific trade over the next 15 years has the potential for unprecedented economic advancement for both B.C. and Alberta.
- The B.C. port system is the gateway for half of Canada's maritime exports and 85 per cent of western provincial exports, including coal, forest products, petroleum petrochemicals and grain.
- By 2020, B.C.'s port system will be able to handle \$75 billion in trade (up from \$35 billion today)
- This will contribute approximately \$10.5 billion in economic output every year to the Canadian economy - \$7 billion, of which, will flow directly into British Columbia. For these reasons, British Columbia has taken a leadership role to maximize its Pacific gateway potential, with Alberta as a key partner.

##### **The Strategy**

- The B.C. Ports Strategy provides direction and priorities for action so all partners can contribute to building a competitive, reliable ports system.
- The goal is to have all port system partners working together by 2015 to maximize trade traffic and economic growth opportunities for British Columbians and Canadians, supported by meeting three objectives:
  - Maximize Asia-Pacific container traffic growth opportunities
  - Maximize export and regional growth opportunities
  - Maximize B.C.'s position as a world cruise destination
- Success will be measured by industry and governments ability to capture the growth and manage some of the fundamental challenges, such as meeting future capacity needs, coordinating infrastructure development and investment, and enhancing port competitiveness so we compete with US west coast ports, and Mexico.

##### **Action to move forward**

- Premiers endorsed the Ports Strategy and agreed to move forward on implementation. They will form an interim advisory group (IAG) of west coast port partners and work together on an assessment of infrastructure needs.

#### **West Coast Container Super Port:**

##### **Why we need a container super port**

- The rapid economic growth in Asia has created an extraordinary opportunity for British Columbia to establish a Container Super Port to take advantage of the unprecedented increase in Asia-Pacific container trade.
- With an increase of 30 – 50 per cent per year from China, a super Port would allow Canada to capture a significant portion of the anticipated new traffic.

### **Super port location**

- The Port of Prince Rupert provides significant, strategic competitive advantages for the development of a container Super Port.
- It is the shortest, fastest shipping route between North America and Asia (It is two days closer than Vancouver to Asia, and two days closer to the United States Mid-West by rail). Prince Rupert is the third deepest ice-free harbour in the world.

### **Action to move forward**

- Premiers agreed to complete the West Coast Container Super Port feasibility study this month and work together to develop a detailed business case.

## **Northern Airports Strategy**

### **Why we need a strategy**

- Airports and air services help support the economic and social well being of B.C.'s and Alberta's northern communities.
- During the past decade many changes have occurred in the aviation sector, including airline restructuring and movement of airport and air navigational services management from the federal government to other entities.
- This means many northern airports have experienced challenges, and have been negatively affected in their ability to be economic enablers in their communities.

### **The Strategy**

- The Northern Airports Strategy outlines some key principles and an approach for the development of a B.C./Alberta plan.
- The proposed strategy focuses on public use airports located along and north of the Highway 16 corridor. Because of the economic connection to Prince George, airports in Quesnel and Williams Lake have also been included in the strategy.
- The strategy will examine opportunities for strengthening the role of the aviation sector to further contribute to northern economic development.
- Options such as limited provincial capital funding will be considered where strategic investments may be needed to maximize economic potential.
- In developing the strategy, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to northern airports will be examined. This information will be gathered in consultation with airport and airline operators and community members.

### **Action to move forward**

- Premiers agreed to allocate resources to move forward with this strategy.

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