



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008OTP0161-000958
June 20, 2008

Office of the Premier
Office of the Governor of Washington

BC-WASHINGTON WORK TO IMPROVE CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL

KELOWNA – Premier Gordon Campbell and Washington Governor Chris Gregoire will co-lead a mission to Ottawa and Washington to present a new joint Border Action Plan, signed today at the third annual B.C.-Washington Joint Cabinet Meeting. The plan calls for the Canadian and U.S. federal governments to continue to work with B.C. and Washington state to streamline cross-border travel and trade to avert mounting border line-ups as the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games approach.

“B.C. and Washington share a \$9.5-billion trade relationship, close personal ties, and strong cultural connections. Working with Governor Gregoire’s administration, we have reached agreements that will help improve the traffic situation at the border,” Premier Campbell said. “Both federal governments have supported B.C. and Washington on the Enhanced Driver’s Licence program and Canada’s federal government has partnered with B.C. on a \$285-million infrastructure improvement program. As the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games approach, it is important that all levels of government continue to partner to ensure we have a safe, secure border that is able to move people and goods efficiently.”

“With the 2010 Olympics fast approaching, the time is now to tackle some of our border challenges,” said Governor Gregoire. “We need secure borders. We also need a system in place that allows traffic to cross the border safely and quickly if we want to continue to promote trade and tourism. I appreciate the partnership Washington has developed with B.C., and I’m pleased with the progress we have made together so far. But we have more work to do. We can’t put this off any longer, and we need the co-operation of both federal governments to finish what we started.”

More than 1.3 million trucks cross the U.S-B.C. border each year. The four main ports of entry between B.C. and the Puget Sound area include the third-busiest passenger vehicle and the fourth-busiest commercial crossings along the U.S-Canada border.

The agreement signed today by B.C. and Washington will see the province and state work together and engage with the federal governments for action on several key areas:

- Action on border infrastructure and operations:
 - Ensure that construction plans for the Peace Arch entry point allow that 10 booths will be available on the U.S. side in time for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games;
 - Ensure adequate staffing of the four Cascade border crossings, especially during the 2010 Olympics and upgrading of Peace Arch;
- Action on border waits and processing – improve infrastructure and upgrade secure Remote Frequency Identification (RFID) readers to support NEXUS, FAST and Enhanced Driver’s Licences;

- Action to increase use of NEXUS and FAST – marketing to frequent border crossers in the Lower Mainland and Puget Sound areas in partnership with the business community, tourism industry, and regional organizations;
- Action on the Enhanced Driver’s License program – increase promotion, practical support, and consider Enhanced Driver’s Licences as a valid document for Canada-U.S. air travel;
- Action to reduce emissions at the border – develop a joint anti-idling program and improve communication on wait times and line-up conditions for border crossings to help drivers make informed decisions about where and when to travel;
- Action on compatibility of cross border communications – ensure first responders can communicate effectively in emergency situations on both sides of the B.C.-Washington border and work to harmonize transportation communication systems.

Five other agreements were also signed during the B.C-Washington Joint Cabinet meeting, including:

- Work-plan on Public Safety and Transportation Radio Communications Systems;
- Memorandum on Greening the Border
- Memorandum on Alternative Fuel Distribution
- Memorandum on Coastal Climate Change Adaptation
- Memorandum on Collaboration on Tourism

This is the third joint Cabinet meeting between B.C. and Washington. Since 2005, B.C. and Washington have signed 17 agreements, including collaboration on Climate Action and Pacific Ocean Preservation (2007), forests (2007), clean-technology market opportunities (2007) the Enhanced Drivers Licence (2006), emergency management (2006), public health (2006) and transportation (2006).

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Dale Steeves
Communications Director
Office of the Premier
250 387-6605

Washington Governor's Communications Office
360 902-4136

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.