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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS SASKATCHEWAN'S
ABORIGINAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY WITH NEW FUNDING FOR
SERVICE NETWORK***

SASKATOON, SK – Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis business community will continue to have access to business information, planning and market research through the Aboriginal Business Service Network (ABSN) initiative, thanks to renewed funding of \$168,300 from Western Economic Diversification Canada that was announced today by Maurice Vellacott, Member of Parliament for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin.

The Canada Saskatchewan Business Service Centre (CSBSC) and Visions North Community Futures Development Corporation will continue to coordinate the ABSN throughout Saskatchewan until March 31, 2008. This unique partnership is producing tangible results that support education, entrepreneurship and economic development in Saskatchewan's Aboriginal communities.

“This funding renewal demonstrates how our Government is working in partnership with business and Aboriginal organizations to improve the lives of First Nations and Métis people, especially those living in rural and remote communities,” said MP Vellacott, on behalf of The Honourable Rona Ambrose, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification. “This investment means more Aboriginal people can access the tools and skills training they need to start a business or grow their existing business.”

The ABSN is designed to help First Nations and Métis entrepreneurs find the information they need, providing free-of-charge access to government information on business programs, services and regulations. These resources are tailored to meet unique requirements of Aboriginal clients.

"The Aboriginal Business Service Network connects directly with dedicated and interested volunteers (champions) in First Nations communities to create an awareness of economic development opportunities in rural Saskatchewan," said Emily Cherneski, ABSN coordinator. "One of the tools utilized is the asset mapping process, which begins with an assessment of strengths and weakness within a community, and leads to designing community-based activities to reach goals and objectives planned by the community, based on community need."

Over this next term, the ABSN in Saskatchewan will deliver training and orientation sessions on business planning and online resources such as the Interactive Business Planner.

Saskatchewan's ABSN also recognizes the importance of providing access to technology and is collaborating with the Community Access Program (CAP) to ensure that Aboriginal entrepreneurs have a gateway to this technology. Through the CAP program, several student interns are placed in ABSN partner locations to teach and champion the use of technology as a means to bridge the information and training gap. A number of these interns have obtained full-time employment as a result of this initiative.

For more information on Aboriginal Business Service Network services in your area, visit www.cbsc.org/absn.

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