CHARTING BC’S ECONOMIC FUTURE
100 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
PARTNERED WITH INITIATIVES PRINCE GEORGE
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**HOPES AND CONCERNS FOR BC’S ECONOMY**
- HOPES ............................................................... 2
- CONCERNS ....................................................... 3

**SWOT ANALYSIS FOR BC’S ECONOMY**
- STRENGTHS ....................................................... 4
- WEAKNESSES ..................................................... 4-5
- OPPORTUNITIES .................................................. 6-7
- THREATS ........................................................... 7

**TOP ACTIONS FOR BC’S ECONOMIC FUTURE**
- GROUP #1 .......................................................... 8
- GROUP #2 .......................................................... 9
- GROUP #3 .......................................................... 10-11
- GROUP #4 .......................................................... 12-13
HOPES AND CONCERNS FOR BC’S ECONOMY

Hopes

• That we’re successful in moving our community and region forward in a smart and sustainable way that is not a boom and bust

• That we find a way to capture as much of the opportunity that’s before us in a way that’s sustainable and that reflects the 3 elements of this framework (wealth creation, social equity and environmental protection)

• More education around tourism and the economy

• Include Aboriginal people in opportunities

• To have adequate infrastructure for Aboriginal populations/communities (water, sewer, etc.)

• Reassess liability insurance so that it doesn’t continue to obstruct growth in the tourism industry

• That we can have wealth creation that addresses social equity and environmental protection

• Include global perspective in regional discussions

• To see the economy grow and diversify into secondary and tertiary industries

• That we can fundamentally shift the education and involvement of youth in the economy

• To see the framework shift. BC can’t have social equity and environmental protection without wealth creation—enabling wealth creation starts first

• To ask the hard question: what do we want?
Concerns

- That the opportunities around natural resources are stalled, and the North will continue to struggle to move forward
- Land claims are the largest obstacle to future resource development
- We won’t have the people to build a skilled labor population
- We don’t do enough for Aboriginal learners
- Infrastructure in Aboriginal communities is twenty-years behind
- As we move forward with wealth creation, concern that environmental protection and social equity will not be addressed
- Aging demographics are a problem
- We don’t know how to have a non-polarized conversation
- We won’t see the economy diversify into tertiary industries, and will not focus on wealth creation
- That we won’t ask the hard question: what do we want?
SWOT ANALYSIS FOR BC’S ECONOMY

STRENGTHS

• Fiscal confidence and stability
• Strong mandated government
• Asia-Pacific gateway
• Low regulatory burden compared to other Canadian jurisdictions
• Natural resources—resource rich
• Education level
• Outdoor lifestyle
• Physical environment of the North
• Potential (untapped) in Aboriginal communities
• Collaborative people
• Responsive post-secondary
• Infrastructure
• Social safety net
• Young country
• Multi-cultural friendly
• Geographically positioned for stability
• Stable banking system
• Environmentally stable
• Tourism—Beautiful BC
• Crown land base
• Dispersed rural population
• Resource extraction competitiveness
• BC’s communities are highly networked and share a great deal of knowledge/leadership/energy between themselves
• The tourism industry is experiencing unprecedented success; the focus on active living and cultural experience create many social/environmental benefits (ie. historic sites, aboriginal tourism, mountain biking, festivals)
• Land/water/soil – the lifeblood of healthy economies and BC has LOTS!
WEAKNESSES

• Career opportunities and job openings do not match the skills of the workforces exiting post-secondary
• Rural communities play a key role in main economic drivers, but lack the social structure needed to recruit skilled workers
• Poverty poses a major barrier to community resiliency; how can we improve it?
• Low level of public trust in government
• Lack of qualified workforce numbers
• Continued reliance on natural resources that are subject to the boom and bust cycle
• Aging population
• Rising age of marriage
• Lowering birth rate
• Risk-weary decision makers
• Complacent/rule-following populace
• Poor trades/apprenticeship programs
• High cost for education
• Surety over the land base
• Lack of long-term vision for the future
• Heartland vs. hinterland polarization
• Greed
• Polarized political and social environment
• Urban/rural population disparity
• Infrastructure investment in rural communities
• Underemployment in minority populations
• Skilled labor mobility/availability
• Not enough value-added manufacturing
• Land claims uncertainty
• Social entitlement
• Insurance rates
• Aboriginal relations
• NIMBY
• Union wage rates
• Dependence on fossil fuels
• Shrinking forestry sector (i.e. From pine beetle)
• Shrinking population base in North
• Professional protesters
• Vancouver-centric agenda
• Uncertainty created by lack of treaties

OPPORTUNITIES
• Educate the “604”
• Better standard of living for all
• Increasing access to international markets
• Niche economies: highly adaptive and incredibly resilient entrepreneurs and companies can survive boom and bust cycles
• Sense of place—people are reconnecting with the places where they live and showing stronger interest in those local economies
• BC citizens are empowered relative to the rest of the globe
• Post-secondary education could be more connected with industry
• Government policy to help facilitate future opportunities
• Greater global market participation
• Immigration of highly education/skilled individuals will contribute to the labor pool and increase diversity
• Build on tradition/history, but make room for new paths
• Resource diversity
• Proximity to Asia
• Increased entrepreneurship and access to capital
• Shift educational opportunities to North and attract workforce
• International education
• Become a skills training hub for BC and elsewhere
• 2015 Canada Winter Games in Prince George and the national exposure it will bring
• Leveraging today’s economy to generate prosperity into the future
• Become a global leader in sustainable economic development
• Market BC’s beautiful natural environment for global tourism investment/growth
• Potential for more value-added production

THREATS
• BC doesn’t act on opportunity in a timely manner
• Ill prepared for the future (i.e. workforce planning/education)
• BC hasn’t take proper measures to avoid the boom and bust cycle (natural resources)
• Lack of diversification in our economy
• Trade/export barriers/protectionism
• Environmental protectionism
• Global economy/markets. Global “black swan” events out of our control
• Lack of resolution of aboriginal social equity/wealth
• Perception of BC as a difficult place to get major projects completed
• US recession
• Other markets getting ahead of BC for investment (LNG)
• Increased regulatory burdens
• Competitive advantage
• Labor shortages—BC is relying on a workforce that doesn’t exist
• Unprepared for climate change and other natural disasters
• Aging population
• Lack of acceptance of diversity
• Mismanagement of resources
• Unclear ownership/management of land
• Lack of participation in international supply chains (re: regulations/law)
• Apathy
• Globalization: weaker environmental standards, and lower costs in competing countries
• Militarization of arctic
• Selling off of resources and rights to resources
• Red tape federally, provincially (not PG, of course)
• NIMBY
• Unprepared for infrastructure demise
TOP ACTIONS FOR BC’S ECONOMIC FUTURE

GROUP #1

Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. To invest in targeted skills training in the growth areas in the BC economy
   - Alignment of skills training with labor needs

2. Targeted programming to bring new investment into the economy
   - Maintain competitive tax structure and regulatory environment
GROUP #2

Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Youth incentives
   - Educational programs, training, and industry apprenticeships where the work is, to retain trained youth in rural areas
   - Attracting international students to rural areas
   - Small business and entrepreneurship training

2. Land Claim settlements
   - Negotiate and settle land claims

3. Shorten timelines for approval of initiatives
   - Develop clear legislated objectives
   - Cut out the red-tape for approvals

4. Maximize natural resource development

5. Value added diversification
   - Apply the model of development in Williams Lake: sawmills, biomass, timber framing, log homes, pellet plant from - use of all residuals in one geographic area
GROUP #3

Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Deal with Land Claims
   - Move forward on land claims more effectively, government and private interests

2. Transportation Infrastructure (roads, rail, pipelines, invest in this to move people or commodities)
   - Create a more-efficient connection to the northeast; the northeast is very diverse on the natural resource side, but the benefits go to Alberta because it’s easier to access Edmonton. Address the routes for goods movement to the northeast, they currently have to use expensive and modified means to do so
   - Prince George is somewhat land locked- access to markets and for business is critical for Prince George
   - Highways—high degree of growth from Prince George to Prince Rupert, but a limited two-lane highway

3. Redistribution and reallocation of funds back to communities to create sustainability, through mechanisms such as a trust fund (i.e. Tumbler Ridge—trust fund to provide stability in the downturns). To have redistribution at the community level (regional level is too big). Long-term legacy piece (i.e. Columbia basin trust)
   - Apply these concepts to new revenues moving forward, to make it politically palatable. Communities should also have some decision-making capacity
   - North-South tension misses the point to some extent; each community within the north has very different needs, and this framework does not reflect these differences

4. Set narrower guidelines for larger public and private works that encourage decisive timelines and more logical and clear processes for specific projects. Get to the root of the issue quickly, and get to the hard questions right away.
   - Assessments—have a true dialogue, and involve those with a proven, vested interest, rather than people that just want a podium
   - Reduce regulatory red-tape to help projects move through assessment more quickly
5. Government getting up to date with technology, and getting ‘smart’

6. Connect post-secondary institutions with both trades and professional industries
   - There is a disconnect between the education and what professions are really needed; connect university research to industry needs
   - Further the education, research and learning of local communities. (i.e. UNBC is a key part of the North)

7. Leverage tourism opportunities
   - There is a lot here. Tourism provides access to employment to sections of the population that can’t access other employment
   - Create a livable wage for servers
   - ‘Northern BC’ misses the boat as far as the tourism opportunities in BC- redirect
   - Regulations make the development of tourism industries difficult; health and safety, liability, etc. (i.e. You can’t sell game in BC at a farmers’ market)
GROUP #4

Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Redefine the definition of ‘wealth’ into ‘economic prosperity’
   - ‘Wealth’ then becomes the result of the balance of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental health

2. Focus on our competitive strengths
   - Diversify and strengthen our areas of advantage. These include: environmental stewardship, productivity and hard workers, processing and transformation of natural resources, creativity and exploration, and value learning.
   - Culture and perception—People up here get the work done with a pull-up-your-socks, we-can-do-this-together attitude. There’s something different, because of isolation, the sense of community is alive and well; self-dependence (only downside is that this can lead to protectionism, and mistrust of outsiders)

3. Investments in learning (vs. training)—Learning is a value for life development (vs. just training)
   - Research in exploration, innovation
   - Develop a skilled workforce that will attract investment; continue to provide access to higher learning in northern communities
   - Develop overall qualified workers (vs. simply training)

4. Infrastructure development
   - Both hard and soft connectivity
   - Access to power is still an issue. Same with water, internet and cell phone coverage; fiber-optic grows industry
   - Housing—address the growing pinch in the housing market
   - Municipal infrastructure

5. Re-investment in wealth generators

6. Resolve issues of Land Rights and title i.e. Water Rights
7. Creation of new value added products and markets - forestry, agriculture, mining and energy, fisheries, services

Additional Actions to Address Social Equity

- Invest in programming and services to significantly decrease child poverty
- Invest in Aboriginal education in K-12 system to improve their access to the market
- Equitable access to education, healthcare, and legal services
- Reformation of the Indian Act—not under Provincial jurisdiction but BC is the most affected
- Develop the rural health project
- Welcoming communities with support for newcomers
- Planning for different demographics (seniors, youth, women, Aboriginal/First Nations, immigrants)

Additional Actions to Protect the Environment

- Maintain environmental standards
- Maintain the carbon tax
- Continue to invest in alternative energy programs
- Punishment for offenders needs to be severe—we have the regulations, we don’t have the enforcement
- Clarity and certainty around environmental ‘rules’
- Address urban sprawl in urban areas; density would allow for lower housing costs
- Develop product stewardship (i.e. waste streams and recycling)
- Develop energy efficiency systems
- Protect fisheries and oceans
- Protect species and ecosystems diversity