CHARTING BC’S ECONOMIC FUTURE
100 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
PARTNERED WITH OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

WEST KELOWNA
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HOPES AND CONCERNS FOR BC’S ECONOMY

Hopes

- To work ‘outside the box’ more often, start working more creatively
- Move forward to better address equity and sustainability issues
- To see ongoing economic growth, and not another slowdown like in 2008
- To learn from this deliberative dialogue session, and take away lessons for others
- To see an economic balance in the next 30 years
- Opportunity to change the way wealth is created
- Hope that the Westbank First Nation will be able to chart a path forward
- Diversity amongst industries, as opposed to reliance on single industries
- To better integrate communities
- To have more balance between the economy and healthy communities – not just a focus on the money
- To see BC better diversify its export markets
- India is a big trade opportunity—making a small dent in India would have a big effect in BC
- Hopeful that children will have an opportunity to live where they grew up, and prosper in a diverse economy with many options.
- Optimize the tourism experience locally in a way that protects the environment
- More life-skills programs such as Active Measures (Westbank First Nation)
- Place a price on resources
- Hope that BC will shift the resource conversation from ‘either/or,’ to how we can address everything that we need
- Hopeful that children can work, stay and even have grandchildren here
- Utilize existing human capital that exists in the region
- To move from resource extraction into secondary and tertiary industries
- Take an internal look at the economy rather than an external view
- Hopeful that the economy grows with increasing opportunities for young people
- As the economy grows, hope that housing and the living wage grow as well
- To see increasing opportunity for new networks and linkages between different people and resources
Concerns

- That wealth creation will take place without concern for the environment
- Concerned that access to water will limit growth
- Social and economic disparity that exists between Aboriginal people and the wealthy, both in the region and provincially
- Those individuals who have barriers to economic wealth are forgotten
- Losing young employees to Alberta
- That governments are self-centered and not citizen-centered
- Canada relies too heavily on the United States for exports
- Students come to Kelowna/Okanagan region, but don’t stay due to a lack of perceived opportunities
- Environmental concerns are getting lost with the current focus on the dollar
- The gap between those who ‘have’ and those who ‘have not’ is growing at an increasing rate
- Aging population is staying engaged in the workforce longer, disallowing opportunity for young job seekers
- Concerned that there isn’t a balance between the environment, wealth and social concerns
- Worried that as the economy grows, inequity increases
- Settlement programs have diminished in size, in terms of accommodating and integrating newcomers
SWOT ANALYSIS FOR BC’S ECONOMY

STRENGTHS

- Multi-cultural/diverse population
- Beautiful British Columbia—our tourism brand
- Abundance of natural resources
- Education
- Able to communicate practically face-to-face around the world
- Access (geographically) to global markets, specifically to Pacific Rim countries
- Desirable geography
- Diversified industries/economy
- Human resource potential

WEAKNESSES

- Increasing health costs with the aging population
- Influence of ‘global think’ on local economic growth
- USA dependency
- Myth that natural resources are ‘unlimited’—squandering of resources
- Lack of balanced leadership
- Lack of Aboriginal early education investment
- Low rate of innovation
- Imbalance between development wants and environmental costs—lack of understanding and communication between sectors
- Under investment in K-12 education
- Failure to adequately address land question with First Nation people
- Provincial legislature: political stumbling blocks
- Focus on external exports, lack of local focus
- South-western BC focus
- Mismanagement of finite resources—water quantity and quality
- Healthcare—without a healthy workforce, the economy will not prosper
• Disconnect between skills training and job opportunities
• Political reliance on resource industries for growth (jobs/GDP)

OPPORTUNITIES
• Nurture innovation and creativity for a knowledge-based economy
• Increase tourism
• Utilize the human capital that already exists in BC
• Increase Aboriginal employment to benefit First Nation communities
• Sustainable and diversified use of resources
• Further diversification of BC’s economy
• Create opportunity for sectors to collaborate
• Diverse export markets
• Focus on local statistics to better reflect regions
• Sustainable energy
• Innovation in healthcare (holistic approach)
• Potential to be a world-leader in green development

THREATS
• Rigid government policies and administration
• Skill-level of our workforce is not keeping up with sector demand
• Global economic downturn
• Political disregard for the environment
• Dependency on the US economy
• Foreign exchange
• Polarization of Federal Government
• Disregard for local human resources
• Over-dependence on the service sector
• Lack of public willingness to invest in infrastructure required
• Federal legislation controls local and regional growth
• Many sectors exist in silos which obstructs creative collaboration
• Failure to address land and resource usage
• Failure to plan for future operations
• GMO and food production
• BC is a low-cost producer
• Younger population is leaving BC for work
• Growing income disparity
• The number of small or medium size business for sale in the next ten years
• Diminishing agricultural economy
• Aging population
• Lack of affordable housing
TOP ACTIONS FOR BC’S ECONOMIC FUTURE

GROUP #1
Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Invest in infrastructure
   - Reverse the halted railroad—it is affecting the local economy
   - Invest in the ‘ease’ of trade via rail, air, water and road

2. Promotion of linkages between business and educational institutions
   - Invite business into educational institutions to help advise on where the jobs are
   - Increase co-op opportunities

3. Develop and nurture international relations
   - Do so through education, manufacturing, tourism, and service
   - Reduce barriers for international qualifications

4. Reduce restrictive health care policy
   - Privatizing healthcare might provide opportunity—i.e. Westbank First Nation has attempted to get a local hospital to provide opportunity to local community

5. Identification of ‘green’ manufacturing and business opportunities

GROUP #2
Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Regionalization of Municipal Governments
   - Reduce the levels of government
   - Would see an in-migration of wealth

2. Renewal Resource Development
   - Local needs should be considered before external markets are sought—i.e. local water
   - Revisit how we measure the economic costs and benefits of policies that incentivize green growth (this would take into account all the benefits to environmentally friendly programs/incentives)
   - ‘Annual Report Card’—what is the cost of non-renewable?
3. ‘Live- Work- Play’ development philosophy
   - To ensure that the region has long-term viability and attractiveness for residents and businesses

4. Encourage and support self-employment and small business

5. Building local partnerships and relationships
   - Less focus on economic development, more on community economic development
   - Stronger risk analysis and mitigation

**Additional Actions to Address Social Equity**

   - Access to an applied and balanced education
   - Secondary school system should teach introduction to basic financial skills and ‘economy 101’
   - Non-stigmatization of people who live in poverty; provide resources/supports needed to accept some people will always require services; collective vs. personal value system
   - Tax outside property owners who are not permanent citizens, and who do not regularly contribute to the local economy

**Additional Actions to Protect the Environment**

   - Planning through a ‘7 Generation’ approach- learned lessons from Aboriginal people—i.e. Okanagan Nation Water Strategy
   - Introduce new laws that make environmental retrofitting/development mandatory

**GROUP #3**

**Top Actions to Create Wealth:**

1. Proactive Planning:
   - For the demographic shift in the workforce
   - For education—i.e. School District 23’s dual credit program, which allows for skills training
   - For climate action- mitigation and adaptation
2. Allow, support, encourage and FUND innovative ideas for efficient transportation connections to and within smaller communities.

3. Create a catalyst for a cultural shift, to move beyond conversation to implementation:
   - Centrally funded based on a Provincial government policy.

Additional Actions to Address Social Equity:
- Social responsibility built into the planning process—i.e. living wage
- Enshrining safety net into the system—i.e. Urban Outreach Kelowna

Additional Actions to Protect the Environment:
- Instill in the system (school, childcare) the value of the environment to minimize the human footprint
- Recognize the need for realignment of the three pillars: economic, environment and social

GROUP #4
Top Actions to Create Wealth:

1. Economics in Education
   - Begin at an elementary level to develop entrepreneurial training in the public education system
   - Need for public and private investment in this initiative

2. Innovation
   - Create an environment that supports innovation—change the current mindset

3. Ensure access to private and public capital
   - Create incentives for the provision of capital
   - Fiscal control
4. Ensure and maintain sustainability
   - Stimulate and protect goods sector–service industry depends on that
   - Quantify sustainability measure (Federal Government)
   - Maximize GDP per sector

5. Improve mobility of people and goods
   - Sufficient infrastructure and transportation to support all sectors

Additional Actions to Address Social Equity
   - Social responsibility built into a long-term planning process
   - Enshrine a safety net into the system
   - Better access the First Nation labour pool
   - Greater access to training opportunities, review entrance requirements
   - Build human resource capacity of the BC labour force
   - Change the mindset regarding retirement; 55 year olds may have another 20 years of active employment
   - Recognize innovation in the social service sector (not currently recognized for innovation and creative approaches). Not supported by government, despite successes and beneficial effects

Additional Actions to Protect the Environment
   - Environment awareness education, to instill environmental values from a young age, beginning in daycare, continuing into the school system
   - Encourage and enforce environmental legislation—recognize the need for alignment of the economic, social and environmental goals