FORUM ON BC’S ECONOMY
2013 COMMUNITY SUMMIT | OCT 4, 2013
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to extend our thanks to the Honourable Mike de Jong and SFU President Andrew Petter for their thoughtful remarks. To our panelists, Tamara Vrooman, Yuen Pau Woo, Sophie Pierre, and Greg D’Avignon, and panel moderator Carole Taylor, thank you for setting the tone for the day’s dialogue. Thank you to Dr. Roger Gibbins for his keynote presentation, and to Philip Steenkamp for moderating the day’s proceedings. Thank you to Lynda Brown-Ganzert, Jock Finlayson, Barbara Grantham, David Helliwell, Anita Huberman, Kathy Kinloch, Dr. Nancy Olewiler, Sophie Pierre, Richard Prokopanko, Miles Richardson, Daniel Shapiro, Jim Sinclair, Shauna Sylvester, Tamara Vrooman, and Yuen Pau Woo for facilitating the breakout Think Tank sessions.

Thank you to forum participants, and to the staff and volunteers who ensured the success of this event.

Daniel Savas and Jackie Pichette are the primary authors of this report. Comments and edits were provided by Shauna Sylvester, Janet Webber, Marissa Lawrence, Mark Friesen, Betsy Agar and Richard Littlemore. Jasmine Lew designed the report layout.

Our most particular thanks go to Dr. Stephen Jarislowsky, whose continuing record of philanthropy and civic leadership stands as one of the best examples of global citizenship and democratic engagement.

The views expressed in this publication are provided here to stimulate discussion and learning. They do not necessarily reflect the views of SFU staff, funders, collaborators, or SFU Public Square.

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SFU Vision: to serve as BC’s public square

In its 2012 Strategic Vision, Simon Fraser University resolved: “To be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement.” As a signature initiative of that vision, SFU aspires to serve as “BC’s public square for enlightenment and dialogue on key public issues, … [to] be known as the institution to which the community looks for education, discussion and solutions.”

SFU Public Square 2013 Community Summit

To that end, SFU has launched an annual SFU Public Square Community Summit, dedicated to bringing BC residents together to research, discuss, and identify strategies that advance the well-being of BC and its citizens. For the 2013 Community Summit (Sept. 28-Oct. 4), SFU chose the theme, Charting BC’s Economic Future, and convened a series of events, dialogues, and community conversations involving thousands of citizens across BC.

The SFU Public Square 2013 Community Summit culminated on October 4 with a “Forum on BC’s Economy.” More than 140 community leaders from across the province gathered at SFU’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue to: bridge the traditional divides that have dominated conversations about BC’s economy; build upon research conducted by SFU Public Square; increase economic literacy; and foster mutual understanding about the challenges and opportunities facing BC. The following is a report on that Forum and, we hope, a first step in charting a prosperous, equitable, and environmentally sustainable course for BC’s economic future.
What do we need to do, as British Columbians, to chart an economy that creates wealth, promotes social equity and protects our environment?

That was the question that we put before the 148 participants of the SFU Public Square 2013 Community Summit Forum on the BC Economy, on October 4, 2013. We asked experts, community representatives, politicians, and citizens to set aside their differences—something British Columbians seldom do—if only for a day, and to try to fashion a strategy, a set of shared objectives, that would help the BC populace move beyond their famously fractious positions and toward common ground.

Writing in the Vancouver Sun in preparation for the Forum, SFU Chancellor Carole Taylor set the context for this event, pointing out that the goal—a prosperous, equitable, and environmentally healthy BC—is something that everyone wants, but adding this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Affiliation</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

* for more detailed breakdown of participant affiliations, please see end of report

Sometimes, however, it’s easier to agree on high-level principles than on the sticky details of pipeline proposals or port developments. BC faces a whole series of issues where proponents and critics have already begun to shout more—and listen less.

Well, a public square should be noisy. When stakes are high, people should bring their passion and their commitment. But they also should feel safe, respected and supported. They should have a place where they are confident they will be heard—and where they are willing to actually listen in return.
The public square, in this instance, was the SFU Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue and the occasion was the last dialogue event in SFU Public Square’s second annual Community Summit. The lead up to the Summit began earlier in the year with 100 Community Conversations, which took place across the province and culminated in a week of activities in the lower mainland, all charged with the task of Charting BC’s Economic Future.

A significant challenge, as Chancellor Taylor implied, was to bring together a disparate group of business, labour and civil society leaders, Aboriginal representatives, politicians, ex officio, and a couple of journalists, to ask them to speak their minds passionately and positively and to listen in the same spirit. To that end, participants were held to the Chatham House Rule, which ensures participants can speak freely and use the information they hear from others, but protects the identity of each participant.

Not everyone would have predicted a successful day. For example, after attending the event, journalist Bill Tieleman quipped in the Tyee.ca:

“If there’s just one thing everyone in British Columbia politics could agree on, it’s that we can’t be friends. Confrontation always seems to beat cooperation.”

The Process

The Forum on BC’s Economy was designed to build upon research conducted by the SFU Public Square as part of the 2013 Community Summit. This included a provincial survey, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis—compiled through interviews with thought leaders across the province—an academic roundtable, eight provincial dialogues, and a youth forum, as well as 100 self-organized Community Conversations on BC’s economic future. The preliminary findings of this research and the outcomes of the 100 Community Conversations was presented to the participants of the Forum. A separate report of these findings is available on the SFU Public Square website [www.sfu.ca/publicsquare/community-summit/2013summit/materials-outcomes.html].

The day featured a mix of plenary discussions and presentations, a panel discussion, and facilitated roundtable Think Tank sessions, which were held in the Wosk Centre’s Asia Pacific Hall, a unique space with five concentric rings of seating, designed to facilitate dialogue and interaction between participants. Think Tank facilitators used a process model based on the principles of dialogue to guide participants through small group deliberations, and a team of SFU Public Square staff and volunteers took detailed notes throughout—all of which were used to inform this report.
In contrast, the Vancouver Sun’s business columnist, Don Cayo, who was also in attendance, reported on his experience with the event:

“\[\text{It is refreshing to see intelligence and civility spill into the public square, especially when the subject under discussion—the future of the B.C. economy—is so broad and potentially divisive.}\]

SFU President and Vice-Chancellor Andrew Petter opened the Forum with what would become a theme for the day: that our future success depends upon our ability to reconcile apparently conflicting issues, and to do so through a process of democratic engagement that draws more people into the conversation, and assures more people have a voice. Petter said:

“\[\text{There are potential conflicts between creating wealth and protecting the environment. And there are growing concerns about social inequality. We need a resolution to these tensions. We need to find a strategy that recognizes that wealth creation, social equity and environmental sustainability are not only concurrently possible; they must be mutually supportive in any ultimately successful economic model.}\]

After a welcome from BC Minister of Finance, the Honourable Mike de Jong, four panelists were asked to offer some context for the discussions to follow.

Yuen Pau Woo, President and CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation, began by introducing the geographic and social dimensions of BC. Pointing to the rich potential of BC’s status as “The Pacific Gateway,” he noted that the province is a transportation hub that connects all of Canada to ports and trading partners of the Pacific Rim. Furthermore, Vancouver is “the most Asian city outside of Asia,” not only in terms of demographics, but also in terms of its ability to function as a gateway for knowledge and ideas. It is not just the port, he said; it is also the people.

Sophie Pierre, Chief Commissioner at the BC Treaty Commission, called for change, by invoking Albert Einstein’s dictum that problems cannot be solved with the same mindset that created them. Speaking to both equity and prosperity, she noted that when BC’s First Nations prosper, BC prospers, but that the reverse is not necessarily true. Pierre called for deeper
understanding of Aboriginal history and for better education, such that a broader range of individuals from BC’s community of unique First Nations can participate in discovering and customizing solutions to the problems we all face.

Greg D’Avignon, President and CEO of the Business Council of British Columbia, also focused on equity and education. Lamenting that the middle class and younger generations are not sharing adequately in provincial prosperity, he emphasized early childhood education as an important and effective tool for equalizing opportunities. D’Avignon also proposed measures to increase the economic literacy of BC residents to foster thoughtful discussion about: what creates wealth in the province; how we can best develop and draw on our resources; and, critically, how we can share the benefits more equitably.

Tamara Vrooman, President and CEO at Vancity, spoke about the importance of access to capital, and about the success and potential of Vancity’s “values-based” banking model that is consistently outperforming the traditional practices of what she called the “too-big-to-fail” banks. Vrooman challenged participants to think not only about how money is spent and distributed, but also how money is earned in BC.

The morning continued with the first of two Think Tank sessions: small group discussions at which participants addressed the question:

• What are the three most important issues the province must address as we chart BC’s economic future?
KEY ISSUES

The following issues were identified at the first Think Tank session. Forum participants generally agreed that BC must address the growing trend of income inequality and must protect the sustainability of its natural environment. Regionalism and skills shortages are seen to be overarching threats to our shared prosperity.

A series of specific issues emerged that can be grouped under three broad categories: economy, equity, and democracy.

Economy

• **Multi-tracking the Path to Prosperity:** In general, participants agreed there is danger in single-track solutions and to the need to pursue a diversified economic strategy that would: encourage economic growth across resource and service industries; work to reconcile concerns about climate change and responsible resource development; capitalize on growth in the so-called green technology sectors; expand the knowledge economy; and foster innovation.

• **Business Capital:** To create a role for value-based banking, BC businesses and entrepreneurs require direct and local investments, as well as access to credit, and government needs to incentivize corporate social responsibility.

Equity

• **Human Capital:** Participants also expressed concern for the need to invest in human capital by way of early childhood and post-secondary education, First Nations’ education, civic education, and general economic literacy, and the need to align educational programs with market demands, so as to ensure adequate and appropriate skills training.
• **Cultural Diversity:** BC can capitalize on its reputation as a gateway to knowledge, people, and ideas by taking advantage of its diverse and globally connected population, by promoting its diversity of workplace, and by improving programs to recognize foreign credential.

• **Aboriginal Inclusion:** More can be done to include First Nations in the creation and distribution of wealth, and to foster greater understanding of and appreciation for First Nations’ perspectives.

• **Affordability, Particularly for Children and Families:** Most participants shared concerns for the high cost of housing, food, and education, and some suggested those high costs warrant a living wage policy.

• **Public Wealth Generation and Investment:** Tax reform was a mechanism that was suggested for redistributing wealth and addressing social inequality, and to channel resource revenues into clean/green infrastructure.

**Democracy**

• **Informed and Inclusive Dialogue:** In an overwhelming consensus, participants agreed on the value of these kinds of open forums that link regions, generations, sectors, and political constituencies, and citizens of all economic and cultural backgrounds, who are in the search of a shared economic vision and a plan to enact it.

• **Democratic Reform:** In general, participants were concerned with citizen disengagement. Participants showed specific enthusiasm for electoral reform, especially if it could reduce the antagonism and polarity of BC’s political culture and draw in more people to build pragmatic policies.

Participants recognized that these categories are not exclusive; for example, skills training and promoting foreign credential recognition both promote prosperity but also equity. Similarly, a responsive and credible democratic framework would provide a more stable base for wealth creation, but also greater confidence in the prospect of protecting a truly sustainable environment.
When the group returned for the afternoon plenary session, Dr. Roger Gibbins, Senior Fellow at the Canada West Foundation, set a central metaphor for the afternoon discussions. Gibbins identified two visions that often dominate the political and economic discussions in British Columbia. For the first, which he characterized as the “pipelines vision,” Gibbins looked out, as though from the streets of his childhood home of Prince George, at BC’s vast natural resource endowment, celebrated for the wealth it has generated already and for the potential it offers for the future. Shifting from BC’s traditional strengths in forestry, fisheries, and mining to new opportunities in everything from vineyards to natural gas, Gibbins pointed out that the resource base offers the promise of sustainable economic prosperity for all British Columbians, for generations to come.

For the second vision, Gibbins adopted the view of a cyclist travelling the bike lanes of Vancouver, a city that aspires to be known as the greenest in the world. In contrast to the proponents of the pipelines vision who would mobilize BC’s economy through the export of bulk commodities, the bike lane visionaries would leverage Metro Vancouver’s vibrant, multicultural, urban environment to create a knowledge-based, low-carbon economy. Still export-oriented, the bike land vision would shift to what Gibbins called “exports of the mind,” such as digital media, academic research, and medical expertise. These would reach global markets through the internet and air travel rather than through tankers or bulk carriers.

But Gibbins pointed out the fallacy in this metaphorical distinction: these visions cannot survive independently. Resource development cannot occur without social license from environmental...
protectors and First Nations (often from a legal perspective), and high-tech and urban service sectors depend upon the capital accessed through the traditional resource base. On the one hand, for provincial resources to be developed in a way that is environmentally and socially sustainable, doing so must respect the attributes of “Supernatural British Columbia” that are valued by the population. Practically speaking, securing a share in the international market is more difficult for resources developed to environmental standards that are lower than reasonable. And in this complicated and highly technical world, resource industries depend upon the intellectual capital associated with urban universities and service providers. As Gibbins put it,

“Workers in the resource sector do not shuffle off into the woods in the morning with an axe over their shoulder and a shovel in hand. Resource extraction is now thoroughly embedded in the knowledge economy, and increasingly demands skills and training that are analogous to other forms of employment in Metro Vancouver.”

On the other hand, the high-tech and urban service sectors depend upon the traditional resource base for actual capital. BC’s economic future will undoubtedly feature the marquee products of the “bike lane” community, but the transition will be gradual. Besides, the province is unlikely to ever completely abandon its wealth of resources.

“So,” Gibbins said, “the question is not whether to choose pipelines or bike lanes, but how to make these visions work together.” He said, finally, “if we are to succeed in creating shared and sustainable prosperity, the stark reality is that the only ground upon which we can stand is common ground.”

The remainder of the day was sufficient to establish that people can agree to the importance of finding a common position more easily than to accept what that position might be without criticism. At the second Think Tank session, the group tackled the question:

• What are the top actions that BC should take to create wealth, address social equity, and protect the environment?
Participants identified the following actions during the second Think Tank session. Some of these may already be in motion and some may conflict. They are provided here to demonstrate the diversity of recommendations participants developed through the dialogue process.

**Convene informed and inclusive discussions about our shared prosperity with the goal of enabling concrete, long term planning**
- Keep the cross-sectoral dialogue going (need a diverse group that includes minorities and young people) to identify common ground and actionable ideas
- Assemble a policy group of leaders in the major sectors—public, private, First Nations, labour, civil society, etc.—tasked with creating an action plan for BC’s long-term economic future
- Create a collaborative, inter-regional economic strategy for municipalities in the lower mainland and Victoria’s 13 municipalities

**Create conditions for inclusion of First Nations**
- Revisit tools used for reconciliation between the Crown and First Nations; develop more options for solutions, as opposed to having a treaty or not having a treaty
- Help build stronger relationships with First Nations
- Integrate First Nations issues in the classroom
- Create a new policy for relations with First Nations; reject policies of denial and assimilation and instead adopt policies of recognition and reconciliation
- Government should insist project submissions include strategies that build relations and share benefits with First Nations

**Invest in and adjust education options to improve outcomes**
- Increase investment in public education and early childhood education

Photos courtesy of SFU PAMR
• Develop and encourage greater use of a German apprenticeship skill occupational model
• Enhance finance and economics education in a wide range of programs to increase economic / financial literacy
• Shift secondary and post-secondary education systems to include more employable skills transferable across all career paths
• Provide bursaries to children in care so they can attend post-secondary institutions

**Explore alternative economic paths to support innovation, economic diversification, and sustainability**
• Put eggs in many baskets—diversify economic investment; support agriculture, green technology, human capital, technology
• Provide more support for individuals involved in research and development, e.g. provide affordable working spaces
• Create a major plan for green infrastructure
• Institute impact assessment requirements for all policies, focusing on climate and inequality impacts, and weighting between these and other economic impacts equally

**Draw upon the talents of our diverse population, and include more groups in economic prosperity**
• Improve credential recognition programs to enhance labour mobility and employment effectiveness across provincial and international borders
• Create social programs that integrate immigrants
• Work towards a more nuanced and strategic demand driven immigration policy system; look to other countries for inspiration
• Pressure professional associations to create a credential recognition programs
Support local business and foster community investment

- Explore a new approach to resource sharing that is provincially based and community governed model, e.g. the Columbia Basin Trust, Vancity, crowd-funding model
- Redirect people to investing money into local economy, which provides both monetary and non-monetary return
- Create a climate that is not bogged down with unnecessary regulation and red tape, making it easier for investors to come to our communities with cleaner, greener projects
- Incentivize institutions to think more about their social impact and integrate that within their business

Initiate policy reform to enable responsible generation and investment of public wealth

- Implement tax reform, e.g. more pricing of externalities (carbon taxes, congestion taxes, bridge pricing), tax housing wealth, increase top personal income tax rates
- Ensure profits from resource sector are re-invested in the local communities where they are created and in green energy technology
- Create a fund for resource development, e.g. a heritage fund, similar to Norway’s social/environmental fund
- Eliminate incentives for non-sustainable businesses; create incentives for business that promote these values

Re-distribute wealth and equalize opportunities for economic participation

- Develop a province wide poverty, or income disparity, with clear, measurable targets, reporting annually
- Invest in early childhood development, e.g. a universal quality child care system of early childhood education
- More support programs for marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as youth and children; better skills training for people searching for jobs that align with employers’ needs
- Maintain and build a strong trade union movement, particularly to address social inequality, protect conditions of work and wages of labour, and promote the equity of wealth generation

Reform political institutions to improve democratic representation and economic decision-making

- Pursue proportional representation
- Change the structures within government to enable long-term thinking
- Encourage people to engage with the political system rather than disengage from it
The WAY FORWARD

The foregoing lists stand as tribute to the willingness of leaders to work together to identify issues and solutions, regardless that there were, and remain, significant differences in opinion about which issues are most important and which solutions might be most effective. There was consensus—enthusiasm even—about the need for a more formal mechanism for cross-sectoral dialogue and research on the BC economy. As the journalists noted in post-event coverage, this process proved to be a useful step in breaking down silos and engaging a diversity of voices in a meaningful dialogue; it was an important early step in affecting public policy.

Thanks to the history of provincial partisanship and passion, there is a pressing, ongoing need for dialogue; for more opportunities for this kind of deliberative democratic engagement. At a time when the loudest debaters seem determined to identify either [and only] the “pipeline” or the “bike lane” vision as correct, there is a greater need than ever to expand the public square to find the elements of each that are worthy and mutually supportive; to promote democratic engagement and economic literacy among BC residents; and to encourage and build a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges facing the province.
PARTICIPANT AFFILIATIONS

Facilitators
- Anita Huberman, Surrey Board of Trade
- Barbara Grantham, Vancouver General Hospital and UBC Hospital Foundation
- Daniel Shapiro, Beedie School of Business, SFU
- David Helliwell, Pulse Energy
- Jim Sinclair, BC Federation of Labour
- Jock Finlayson, Business Council of British Columbia
- Kathy Kinloch, Vancouver Community College
- Lynda Brown-Ganzert, Curatio.me
- Miles Richardson, Institute on Governance
- Nancy Olewiler, School of Public Policy, SFU
- Richard Prokopanko, Rio Tinto Alcan
- Sophie Pierre, BC Treaty Commission
- Shauna Sylvester, SFU
- Tamara Vrooman, Vancity
- Yuen Pau Woo, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Elected Government
- Councillor, City of Surrey
- Councillor, City of Vancouver
- MLA, Burnaby-North
- MLA, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
- MLA, Surrey-Whalley
- MLA, Vancouver-Kingsway
- MLA, Victoria-Beacon Hill

First Nations (Representation/Relations)
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Government of Canada
- Castlemain Group
- Communica Public Affairs
- Musqueam Band
- National Aboriginal Economic Development Chair, University of Victoria
- Okanagan Nation Alliance

Civil Society
- Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada
- Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- BC/Yukon Command, The Royal Canadian Legion
- Canada West Foundation
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- David Suzuki Foundation
- EcoTrust Canada
- First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
- Fraser Basin Council
- Immigrant Employment Council of BC
- Institute on Governance
- MOSAIC
- New Democratic Party of BC
- Portland Hotel Society
- Social Planning and Research Council of BC
- The Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations of BC
• Tides Canada Foundation
• Vancouver Foundation
• YMCA

Public Service
• Agricultural Land Commission
• BC Statistics
• Economic Development Office, City of Surrey
• Former Attorney General of British Columbia
• Ministry of Advanced Education
• Office of the Deputy Solicitor General, Ministry of Justice
• Premier’s Technology Council
• Province of BC
• Vancouver Public Library
• Western Economic Diversification Canada

Business/Industry
• Bing Thom Architects
• Downtown Vancouver Association
• Evans Endeavors Inc.
• FortisBC
• Greater Vancouver Gateway Council
• Heenan Blaikie
• Kim Baird Strategic Consulting
• HSBC
• Kra-Mar Investments
• MagPower Systems Inc.
• MEC
• Nanotech Security Group
• Pan American Silver Corp
• Rio Tinto Alcan
• Roslyn Kunin and Associates, Inc.
• Saltworks Technologies
• Stantec
• Sustainability Ventures
• Telus
• Venture Kamloops
• West Star Communications
• Wipro Technologies
• Wolterra Explorations

Business Association
• BC Chamber of Commerce
• BC Green Growers’ Association
• BC Technology Industry Association
• British Columbia and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council
• Burnaby Board of Trade
• Business Council of BC
• Coast Waste Management Association
• Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association
• Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association
• North Peace Economic Development Commission
• Vancouver Economic Commission

Education/Academia
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• Department of Economics, SFU
• Department of Economics, UBC
• Department of Economics, UNBC
• Department of Political Science, SFU
• Executive MBA in Aboriginal Business and Leadership, SFU
• Innovation Office, SFU
• Northern Lights College
• Sauder School of Business, UBC
• School of Public Policy, SFU
• University of Victoria
• Vancity Community Engagement Office, SFU

Crown Corporation
• BC Assessment
• BC Investment Management Corporation
• BC Pavilion Corporation
• Vancouver Airport Authority

Labour
• BC Federation of Labour
• BC Government and Service Employees’ Union
• Hospital Employees’ Union
• International Longshore and Warehouse Union
• Labour Environment Alliance
• United Steelworkers

Cooperative
• Campbell River Economic Development Corporation
• CCEC Credit Union
• Central I Credit Union
• Coast Capital Savings
• Seedstock Community Currency
• Vancity

Faith Community
• Christ Church Cathedral
• Iona Pacific Inter-religious Centre

Media
• Business Columnist

Student
• Simon Fraser University

Retiree
• Centre for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy, UVIC (retired)
• Formerly BCIT