

IMAGINE BC

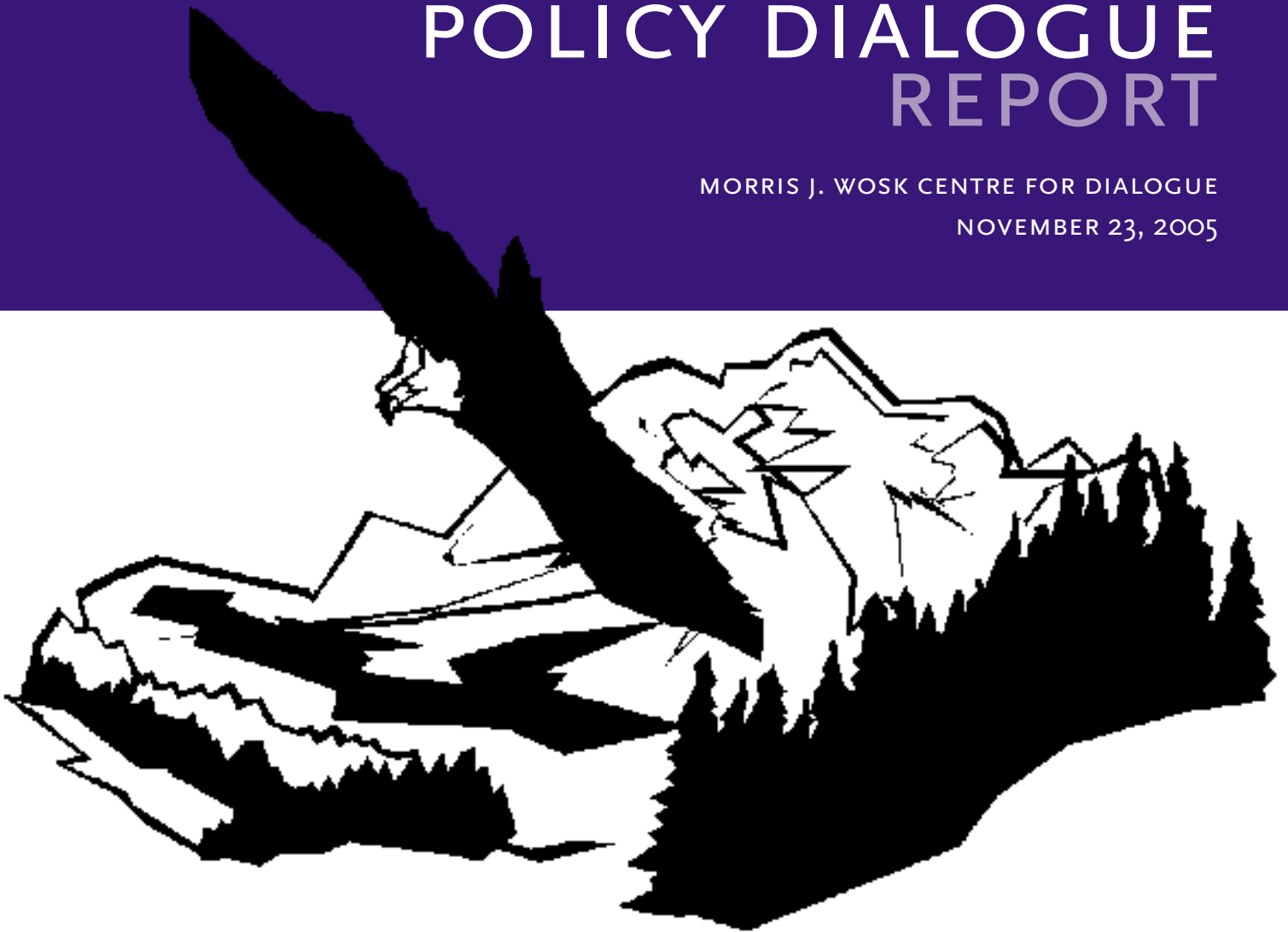
Dialogues on the Future of British Columbia

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

POLICY DIALOGUE REPORT

MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

NOVEMBER 23, 2005



Introduction

On November 23, 2005 IMAGINE BC convened a dialogue with the 2005–2006 delegates and policy makers from government and non-governmental sectors whose work is concerned with the intersection between the economy and ecology in BC. The purpose of the meeting was for IMAGINE BC delegates to present their consensus statement and stimulate dialogue with and among the invited guests.

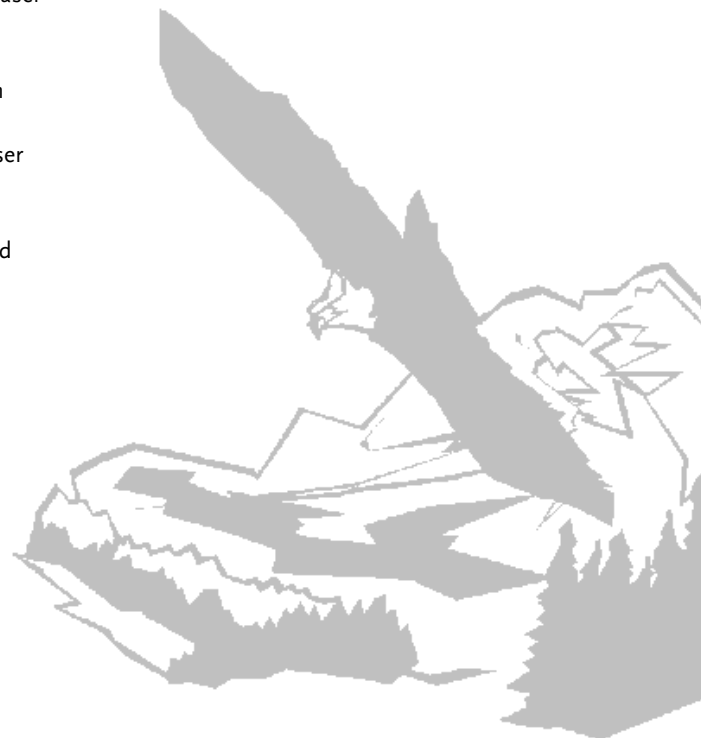
Process

A guest list of policy makers was generated from the IMAGINE BC database, the 2005-2006 delegates and from recommendations from community opinion leaders. IMAGINE BC invited 297 individuals and 52 attended. The invitations were purposely sent to individuals who functioned in a policy-making capacity or were interested in policy response. Nine of the 13 2005–2006 delegates attended. The meeting was held on November 23, 2005 from 3:30–5:30 in the Strategy Room at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University Vancouver.

The session began with a welcome from Milton Wong, Chairman, HSBC Investments (Canada) Limited and Chancellor Emeritus of Simon Fraser University. Joanna Ashworth, the Director of Dialogue Programs at Simon Fraser University, gave a general introduction to IMAGINE BC and facilitated the session.

The Delegates' Presentations

The 2005 Consensus Statement from the Bowen Dialogue was sent to the participants and also distributed at the meeting. Rather than repeating the lengthy discussions summarized in the report, Joanna Ashworth asked each of the delegates present to reflect on the process and outcome of the *Ecology and Economy: Navigating the Future of British Columbia* Bowen Dialogue from their own perspective.



Discussion

The following summarizes the main themes of the discussion.

“It should be a disturbing conversation.”

Many individuals at the session, both delegates and guests, expressed a sense of urgency about the future before us if we do not shift from the current economic and ecological trajectory. While some people felt discussing dark scenarios leads to people tuning out, others considered it a valuable exercise that brings participants face to face with potential realities and ‘wakes them up.’ Several speakers identified that a crisis such as experienced by New Orleans is also an opportunity to come together and form a new culture and a new process from which to do business.

“But full of heart.” Many of the delegates describe the roller coaster of emotions that they experience when confronting the present state of the ecology—globally and locally—especially with the exigencies of climate change. They also noted though, that when people dropped the PowerPoint presentations and used dialogue and sat down with their peers and communicated their love for this province, there was heartfelt communication capable of creating new relationships that get beyond polemics that is characterized by a generosity of spirit. This approach is what is needed to create conditions for change.

“It should be optimistic.” Some individuals felt it was important to recognize that we are naturally problem-solving people who want to identify a problem and then get on with solving the challenge. One suggestion with regards to keeping things focused positively and locally was to promote ‘eating local foods and protecting our local agricultural lands.’

“Do we have the media we need?” There was general agreement that the message to support change needed to get out to the public and that the media was the one of the most powerful ways to do

this. Several speakers were critical of the analysis of the available media, some even calling for new media approaches. Someone else identified that we should not look to media to carry the torch but rather think about creating new and inspiring leadership that would work with media. Delegates suggested that we work to shift the public narratives to be more consonant with the desired future for BC, one that is ecologically and economically sustainable.

“Do we have the leadership we need?”

Many discussants identified that thinking in silos on comprehensive issues was no longer sufficient. One of the IMAGINE BC delegates reflected that as a landscape architect she thought she understood interdisciplinary work before the Bowen Dialogue and now realized she had a different, more complex understanding. Further, there was a sense of frustration about leadership that reinforced the silos and did not encourage innovation. Reference was made to a new generation of managers in China and India who are seen as extremely innovative in this regard.

“Are voluntary measures sufficient to realize the change that needs to happen?”

A number of discussants despaired about voluntary change suggesting that change happens either through crisis or fiscal levers. What are the most effective policy levers? For business? For community? For individuals?

“What about social equity in discussions on economy and ecology?”

Several people talked about the importance of linking discussions on sustainability with social equity, as it is easy to say users must pay but difficult to imagine how this strategy would work without creating deeper divides between social strata in our province. Two speakers identified the importance of arts and culture in bridging cultural divides to talk about the future we desire for BC.

“Where are the youth?” Several people talked about how important it is to work with young people. Young people understand that the future is uncertain given the global shocks. If change is about increasing understanding, the promise inherent in providing free universal university education was seen as a potentially important strategy to build our leadership for the future. Some delegates remarked that we need to have more young people in the room in a meaningful way.

“Do we need a new understanding of economics?” Several speakers addressed the need for economic literacy. This was not only in terms of how businesses reported on profits but also how government made policy and offered tax benefits for industry and addressed social inequities between citizens via tax and other government policies. Several discussants seemed to think the challenge was to integrate ecological thinking into current models of the economy.

“What is the role of myth and narrative?” Several speakers understood how important it was to address fundamental myths that British Columbians have developed. Heavily armed with myth, it was suggested that new reports with new understandings of global stress don't generate change. The myth of 'Beautiful BC' was seen as a major barrier to change. Similarly the narratives about public action were seen to run counter to a sustainability message. For example, current concerns around Avian Flu promote a 'scientific' approach to food management that disadvantages local suppliers who work at a smaller, more sustainable level. The narrative around public protection is in support of agri-business rather than in support of small and local actions.

“How can we get the dialogue outside of this room?” Moving the dialogue outside this room is central to the work of IMAGINE BC over the next three years. There were several suggestions raised concerning the need for and value of dialogue that includes: more diverse participation from people outside the existing 'sustainability elite'; more young people; and more rural and suburban people. Given the tensions about the rural and urban economic conditions in BC, it is particularly important for IMAGINE BC to engage with individuals in the rural areas. Such regional or local dialogues will not mean parachuting into rural communities, declaring that change is needed. IMAGINE BC dialogues in the regions will take place at the invitation of the communities and with the involvement of IMAGINE BC champions from these regions. It is also of critical import to set up encounters that work across silos and across disciplines.

Conclusions

The Policy Dialogue concluded at 5:30 pm with many participants still wanting to speak. It was clear that there is great passion for change and those present were engaged in a stimulating dialogue.

Several challenges were put to IMAGINE BC. It is important to inform the dialogue with in-depth analysis, particularly around economic models and promising practices of sustainability. In the regions and communities outside of the Lower Mainland, particularly, it is important that the dialogue is focused on what matters locally. Such dialogues also need to be linked to a BC perspective and a global perspective. As one delegate reiterated, the central questions of IMAGINE BC are good ones: 'What does it take to get a good economy in a sustainable environment? That is, a strong, healthy environment in an inclusive community? It's all about interdependence—it all has to work. We need to work with the research community to fill in gaps.'

IMAGINE BC'S mandate is to stimulate and engage people (experts and citizens alike) in new and informed public conversations about the future and it must continue to find ways to work collaboratively with other individuals and organizations currently engaged in research and reporting in the following areas:

- With economic models in BC and beyond that integrate economy, ecology and social equity (models that 'get it right').
- Focusing on locations within British Columbia where biodiversity is considered fragile and most at risk.
- Integrating research and process methodologies drawing from what is known about social marketing, behavioural change and community engagement as part of the IMAGINE BC strategy.
- In the final moments of the session all dialogue participants were asked to offer their advice on:
- Volunteers interested to work on an Action Group to bring policy traction to the ideas generated by IMAGINE BC.
- Volunteers interested in hosting regional dialogues on the subject of the future of BC's ecology and economy.
- Nominations for IMAGINE BC delegates for the coming year.

See Appendix II for a summary of the suggestions that were forthcoming.

Appendix I

IMAGINE BC: Policy Dialogue • November 23, 2005
Attendee List

Amir Alibhai

Arts Programmer, Roundhouse Community
Arts and Recreation Centre

Joanna Ashworth

Director, Dialogue Programs
Simon Fraser University

Davis Bawtinheimer

Co-op Student, BC Hydro

David Beers

Editor, *The Tyee*

Bill Bourgeois

President, New Direction Resource
Management Ltd.

Guy Buchholtz

Fellow, Simon Fraser University

Ken Cameron

CEO, Homeowner Protection Office

Charles Campbell

Contributing Editor and Freelance Journalist
The Tyee

Eva Cheung Robinson

Program Director, Vancouver Foundation

Ann Cowan

Executive Director, SFU Vancouver

Tim Draimin

Executive Director, Tides Canada Foundation

Mavis Erickson

Barrister and Solicitor
Wagstaffe, Gosh & Company

Haig Farris

President, Fractal Capital

Ian Gill

President, Ecotrust Canada

Enzo Guerriero

Director, VANOC

Nancy Hall

President, Be Well Consultants Ltd.

Dana Hayden

Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy
Office of the Premier

David Helliwell

Senior Policy Advisor to the Hon.
Stephen Owen, Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Cheeying Ho

Executive Director, Smart Growth BC

Lynn Husted

Manager Science, Economics and Analysis
BC Ministry of Environment

Thomas Hutton

Associate Professor, University of British
Columbia

Nures Kara

Fraser River Port Authority

Seth Klein

BC Office Director, Canadian Centre for
Policy Alternatives

Patrick Lauzon

Manager, Merck Frosst Canada & Co.

Sean Markey

Research Director, Simon Fraser University

Janet Moore

Centre for Sustainable Community
Development, Simon Fraser University

Donna Morton

Executive Director, Centre for Integral
Economics

Caroline North

Legal and Administrative Manager,
North Growth Management Ltd.

Rudy North

President, North Growth Management Ltd.

Jan O'Brien

Vice Chair, BC Labour Relations Board

Thomas Osdoba

Manager, Sustainability Group
City of Vancouver

Patrick Oswald

Manager, The Nature Trust
of British Columbia

Bob Purdy

Regional Coordinator, Fraser Basin Council

William Rees

Professor, University of British Columbia

Judith Reeve

Landscape Architect, Urban and Environmental
Design, Toby, Russell, Buckwell & Partners
Architects

Patrick Reid

Chair, Fraser Basin Council

Noel Roddick

Director, Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust

Mark Roseland

Professor, Simon Fraser University

Bruce Sampson

Vice President, Sustainability
BC Hydro

Carol Seable

President & CEO
Fairmont Hot Springs Resort Ltd.

Joel Solomon

Executive Director, Renewal Partners Co.

Rosalind Solomon

Vincent Verlaan

Community Engagement Manager
University of British Columbia

Doug Walker

Executive Director, The Nature Trust
of British Columbia

Freydis Welland

Versatile Consulting

Julian White

Western Economic Diversification Canada

Faye Wightman

President & CEO, Vancouver Foundation

Bob Williams

Chair of the Board
Vancity Capital Corporation

Peter Williams

Professor, Simon Fraser University

Mark Winston

Professor, Simon Fraser University

Milton Wong

Chairman, HSBC Investments (Canada) Ltd.

Luciano Zago

Director, Bing Thom Architects Inc.

Appendix II

Suggestions for Follow-Up Offered by Dialogue Participants

Policy Dialogue participants were asked to offer:

- Volunteers interested to work on an Action Group to bring policy traction to the ideas generated by IMAGINE BC.
- Volunteers interested in hosting regional dialogues on the subject of the future of BC's ecology and economy.
- Nominations for IMAGINE BC delegates for the coming year.

"Need to create community-based dialogue; need to create dialogue with the thinkers and the government policy makers."

"There's so much out there, so many issues. People are overwhelmed and disempowered. Change requires: cultural shift; working together; media/education (need a focus on specific issues).

[Be careful with] too many issues, too much distribution. Organization [needed] that provides the education, opportunities for action and improvement."

"Need to 'package' IMAGINE BC to get even wider funding for the program. [The] more donors who believe it is 'their own' idea, the greater and more enduring financial participation."

"Dialogue Title: Day of Integrating the Sustainable Movement in Vancouver? How does IMAGINE BC coordinate with other 'futures' and sustainability projects? RVU—Meg Holden, GBFP—past project with John Robinson and QUEST. How do we decrease competition and increase collaboration in the sustainable movement in Vancouver/Region? I'm happy to be more involved and integrate Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue students with IMAGINE BC."

"Suggestions for future delegate: David Butterfield."

"Citizen empowerment and engagement needs positive stories, models to illustrate ideas relevant to sustainability. Emerging model of holistic approach with 'silos' coming together with leading-edge sustainability application. Multi-partner agreement (next month?) at Central Coast (Great Bear Raincoast) with Province, forestry companies, First Nations, Feds, environmental and charitable organizations."

"Suggestions for future delegates: Include some municipal politicians. Today's meeting: good discussion, well-spoken participants with a range of perspectives, a couple of folks overpowered discussion—too bad."

"Future delegates: more youth, more representative samples of the 'average British Columbian'. Reflections on today: 'elephant in the room' is the public's increasing mistrust in society's public and private sector institutions. Without trust there is disengagement and cynicism. People opting out with an 'all is lost' attitude. Contrary to current myths, the public 'gets' sustainability, but is fearful. [They] don't trust those in power to do the right thing; don't believe they can make a difference. IMAGINE BC therefore should look at 'widening the circles'—reach out to the broader public and focus a bit more perhaps on the governance questions."

"Future delegates: [Include] users of the ecology rather than theoretical/academic commentators. Apathy is the biggest issue. We spend too much time getting to work, working, getting home, consuming. Most people know what needs to be done but don't have the time/energy to do it or are frustrated by the fact that all the effort after goes for nothing. I have a blue box that is full every week of newspapers that I don't read—often five papers delivered two times/week—wanted or not."

Report on IMAGINE BC: Policy Dialogue
November 23, 2005

Prepared by Joanna Ashworth and Nancy Hall
For discussion with IMAGINE BC Advisory Committee

NORTH GROWTH FOUNDATION



Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada

IMAGINE BC is a series of annual dialogues presented by Simon Fraser University's Dialogue Programs, Continuing Studies that has set out to change the way British Columbians think and talk about the future of their province.

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