



FROM THE BOOKSHELF TO THE BOTTOM LINE

**Economic Development Forum
Report**

October 26-28, 2005

***Prepared by:
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A steering committee of 16 economic development officers organized the 2005 Northern Economic Forum - From the Bookshelf to the Bottom Line.

This forum, which brought together 94 northern economic development practitioners, would not have been possible without the support of the following sponsors:



Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada

Steering Committee Members

- Don Zurowski – General Manager – CFDC of Fraser Fort George
- Shirly Prokopchuk – Office Coordinator – CFDC of Fraser Fort George
- Roger Leclerc – General Manager –CFDC 16/37
- Paula Peinsznski (special mention of helping organize – no longer with CFDC 16/37)
- Debbie Beauregard – CFDC 16/37
- Jerry Botti – General Manager – CFDC Nadina
- Sharon Robertson – Assistant Manager – CFDC Nadina
- Jim Rushton – General Manager – Prince Rupert & Port Edward Economic Development Corporation
- Gerald Wesley – Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations

- Linda Wallace – Economic Development – Northern Rockies Regional District
- Dr. Greg Halseth – Professor Geography Program – University Northern British Columbia
- Gordon Borgstrom – Regional Project Manager (Prince George) – Ministry of Economic Development
- Donald Manson - Acting Institute Coordinator -Community Development Institute -UNBC
- Butch Morningstar – Regional Project Manager (Smithers) – Ministry of Economic Development
- Allan Madrigga – Economic Development Officer – Williams Lake
- Ray Gerow – President – Aboriginal Business Development Centre

FORWARD

From the Bookshelf to the Bottom Line was a challenging forum to facilitate. Its goal, very broadly defined, was to benefit the growth of the northern economy. The forum provided economic development practitioners the opportunity to focus on several key economic development studies and to identify actions that will help stimulate growth and evolution of northern BC's economy.

Forum participants received a pre-conference package that contained relevant studies including: Ramp-UP – Vital Economy Inc.; Working Together to Create Sustainable Wealth – Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations; and the Connected North – UNBC.

The forum included a series of presentations that built on the contents of the pre-conference package, plus other key topics. The first half of the forum included presentations followed by question and answer sessions. The second half of the forum included small and large group discussions.

As the forum proceeded, an underlying consensus began to emerge. In the final session, the consensus became obvious and is reported in the section of this report entitled Highlights, under the headings Observations and Recommendation.

This report provides a comprehensive account of the forum including forum deliberations, presentations, question and answer sessions, and the pre-conference information package.

From the Bookshelf to the Bottom Line was an important initiative for the northern economy and it is hoped that this report does justice to the breadth and depth of the discussions, presentations and reports.

Thank you for the opportunity of being part of this important event in the development of our northern economy.

Dr. Terry Weninger

HIGHLIGHTS

Observations

Forum participants reached a consensus on five broad themes that northern BC should address in order for its economy to prosper:

- Improve collaboration and cooperation
- Engage First Nations
- Grow the skilled workforce
- Develop northern-friendly government policies
- Enhance communication and information systems

Improve collaboration and cooperation

Forum participants identified the need for improved collaboration and cooperation among economic development practitioners, government and First Nations officials, and private sector leaders. They identified possible models to facilitate collaboration and cooperation and determined a comprehensive list of potential outcomes.

Engage First Nations

Land claims need to be settled and a new relationship needs to be established with the First Nations. The certainty that will develop through land claims settlements will attract and hold investment for economic development. However, it does not make sense to wait for settlements before exploring opportunities and working together. First Nations participation in the economy will facilitate and stimulate economic development.

As a first step in engaging First Nations, all participants need to become better informed about the treaty process and familiar with the provincial government's "New Relationship" document. They also need to work with First Nations people on local economic development initiatives through various partnership mechanisms such as memoranda of agreement and agreements in principle.

Grow the skilled workforce

The growing northern BC economy needs a skilled workforce. The current shortage of skilled workers will hinder economic development. Economic development officials can help address the shortage by:

- Supporting and challenging local training institutions in accessing and re-focusing funding for delivering training programs
- Supporting appropriate immigration policies
- Facilitating industry buy-in
- Assisting and accessing the First Nations expanding labor pool.

Develop northern-friendly government policies

‘One-size-fits-all’ policies are ineffective to deal with the unique challenges and opportunities of the northern BC economy. Efforts to promote northern-friendly policies include:

- Working in collaboration with the Northern Caucus and the North Central Municipal Association (NCMA)
- Cultivating good relationships with various levels of government including First Nations
- Establishing a northern policy filter to assist in shaping and evaluating policies for the north
- Implementing a strategy for lobbying decision makers

Enhance communication and information systems

Forum participants identified the need for relevant and reliable information and clear communication among all regions of the north as a crucial element in fostering economic development initiatives. Northerners must develop clear positions on economic development issues based on sound information.

Northern BC needs a ‘one-stop-shop’ of information relevant to economic development. It is not a good use of scarce human resources to have each economic development office search for the same or similar information.

Northern BC needs to keep local, provincial and federal governments updated on issues and directions in progress, and economic development officials need to stay apprised of relevant local, provincial and federal policy initiatives that affect local and regional economic development initiatives.

Recommendation – Move to Action

Forum participants identified the following requirements to move the northern BC economy forward:

- 1 Reliable and accessible information to support long and short-term planning and to support advocacy efforts
- 2 Information exchange between and among northern economic development agencies
- 3 Strategic planning to move northern economic development opportunities forward without infringing on local jurisdictions or attempting to develop a pan-northern economic development plan
- 4 Well informed mayors, councils, First Nations governments, as well as provincial and federal politicians updated on trends and plans affecting the northern economy

It is therefore recommended that:

A structure be developed to improve collaboration and cooperation among all northern economic development interests.

To fulfill this recommendation, the following should occur:

- 1 The Northern Economic Forum Steering Committee should assume the responsibility of moving the process forward.
- 2 The Northern Economic Forum Steering Committee should expand to include representatives of other northern economic development interests that share similar community planning objectives.
- 3 In determining a model of collaboration and cooperation, the Northern Economic Forum Steering Committee should analyze in detail the advice resulting from the Northern Economic Forum.
- 4 The Northern Economic Forum Steering Committee should:
 - Develop, by July 2006, an implementation strategy for the model including options and follow-up activities
 - Plan a future conference

FORUM AGENDA

This section of the report provides a summary of all presentations and discussions. For sessions marked with an asterisk (*), a copy of the complete presentation is available upon request from the Community Futures Development Corporation of Fraser Fort George.

Wednesday October 26th, 2005

- 6:15 pm: Registration and Networking Opportunity
No Host Bar
- 6:40 pm Welcoming Remarks
Mayor - City of Prince George
Chief Dominic Frederick and Elder, Lheidli T'enneh First Nations
Welcoming to the Territory and Opening Prayer
- 7:00 pm Dinner
- 8:00 pm Dr. Terry Weninger, Master of Ceremonies
Greetings and comments of behalf of federal and provincial government ministers:
*Garth Stiller **
Manager Sustainable Rural Communities, Western Diversification
Jim Cameron
Director – Ministry of Economic Development
- 8:35 pm Keynote Presentation
*Dr. Greg Halseth**
Professor, Geography Program University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) & Canada Research Chair in Rural and Small Town Studies. Greg will provide an overview of research and strategies completed to set the stage for the forum..
- 9:00 pm Dr. Terry Weninger - Closing Remarks

Thursday October 27th

- 7:30 am Registration - Breakfast (buffet)
- 8:30 am Master of Ceremony – Dr. Terry Weninger
- 8:40 am Dr. Greg Halseth, UNBC Community Development Institute *
- 9:10 am Don Zurowski, Northern Community Futures*
- 9:40 am Bob Clark, Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan Update*
- 10:10 am Refreshment Break
- 10:30 am Mayor Nate Bello, Cariboo Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition
- 11:00 am Mayor Len Fox, Omineca Beetle Action Coalition
- 11:30 am Lunch
- 12:30 pm Janine Elo, Northern Initiative Development Trust*
- 1:00 pm Graham Kedgley, Northwest Corridor Development Corporation*
- 1:30 pm Kathie Scouten, Framework Initiative*
- 2:00 pm Existing Regional Collaboration Models - Panel Discussion:
*Charles Scott, Export North**
Mayor Len Fox - Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI)
*Bruce Anderson, Vancouver Island Economic Development Association)**
- 3:00 pm Refreshment Break
- 3:15 pm Table Tasks
- 4:30 pm Dr. Terry Weninger, Closing Remarks

Friday, October 28

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 8:30 am Setting the Stage - Move to Action
- MC presents highlights from the previous day.*
- 9:30 am Next Steps
- Action Items
 - By Whom
 - By When
 - Reporting Out
- 10:15 am Refreshment Break
- 11: 45 am Dr. Terry Weninger, Closing Remarks
- 12:00 pm Draw for Brief Case
- Box Lunch (to stay or go)*

