

Northern Economic Forum

*From the
"Bookshelf to the Bottom Line"*

Briefings Package

"A Pre-Forum Essential Read"

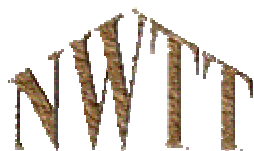


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Northern Economic Forum
From the “Bookshelf to the Bottom Line”

Introduction

The Northern BC economy is improving and research indicates that if we do the “right things” this trend may continue. The 2005 Northern Economic Forum in Prince George will discuss this research with the community and economic development professionals of Northern BC. The Forum, an initiative of Community Futures Development Corporations of Northern BC and partnering economic developers, is made possible through the support of Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Provincial Government.

The conference is to focus on answering key questions that could be implemented by the participants and benefit the northern economy. There are numerous and substantial Northern BC reports, studies, plans, and initiatives that have been generated in recent years; the conference will increase regional knowledge of this work. To do this, we will draw specifically upon the findings of recent large scale economic development research projects.

This package contains brief summaries of three projects. Included is a brief introduction to each report and a general overview of the data collection methodology used. The appendix contains bibliographic and website details for the three summarized Northern BC economic development reports.

Ramp Up! Bringing Out the Best in British Columbia's Regional Economies Report: Sustainable Economic Roadmap

Ramp Up! Bringing Out the Best in British Columbia's Regional Economies: Sustainable Economic Roadmap is a report prepared by Frank Knott, of ViTAL Economy, Inc. and sponsored by Telus. The report, completed in April 2005, contains the results of an economic competitiveness assessment conducted for the Province of British Columbia. In addition to a provincial level point of view, it also contains regional perspectives. The project is an effort to promote sustainable economic development in the non-metropolitan regional economies of British Columbia.

Methodology:

The ViTAL Economy, Inc. team spent 10 months developing this research. They engaged the community by conducting over 400 interviews with provincial, regional, private sector and industry officials and experts. The majority of them (281) were interviews with regional leaders and citizens. A wide variety of economic and business data was obtained and synthesized as well, including over 350 prior provincial and regional economic development reports.

Report Summary

**This is a condensed and edited version drawing from the original text.*

This report tries to answer a series of questions about the future direction of BC's economic development – with a particular focus on the regions outside the Lower Mainland and Victoria. These questions are:

- How well positioned is BC to compete in the future world economy?
- How well positioned are BC's industry sectors to compete internationally?
- What strategic initiatives should BC's regions pursue to compete in the future world economy?
- Given the above, what provincial level economic roadmap should BC follow to generate the highest standard of sustainable prosperity for its citizens? (This is strategic in nature and should not take the place of regional or provincial detailed economic development studies.)

The RAMP UP! Report was developed around three key approaches:

- The market segment research included in the report goes beyond BC's competitiveness. It provides access to global benchmarks for about 17 market segments key to the BC economy, which have not been previously available to BC regions.
- There is a first study of its kind on best practices for achieving sustainable economic development for regions external to Olympic host cities, which was

- based on interviews with Olympic sponsor communities and economic research of long-term results over the past 30 years of Olympic Host City Sponsorship.
- RAMP UP! includes a very specific set of recommendations and measurable goals for implementing sustainable economic development in BC's rural regions, which would be led by the regions and the private sector. These recommendations also include a funding and budget model for these recommendations.

The report examines 3 topics to identify a focus, and set of priorities, for economic development in BC's regions:

- previous economic development work
- industry clusters and
- enabling environment assessments

It also draws on current government efforts to build BC's economy, like the Promoting Commercialization and Innovation Final Report and the BC Progress Board's key recommendations.

The regional focus of the report is also driven by the opportunity to further diversify regional economies away from a dependence on public sector employment, transfer payments, and natural resource industries.

The report identifies 7 high level industry clusters and 17 market segments for analysis of BC global competitiveness, and identification of niche sustainable growth markets for which BC is uniquely positioned. These industry clusters and their associated market segment focus areas include:

- Agriculture – focus on high value agriculture and wine
- Tourism – focus on upper end tourism and adventure/eco-tourism
- Forest products – focus on raw logs, furniture, panels, alder
- Energy – focus on fuel cells/hydrogen
- Marine – focus on salmon aquaculture, yacht building, shellfish aquaculture
- Technology – focus on wireless, biotechnology, specialty computer chips, forest tech and
- Mining

For each industry cluster, the report looks at limitations to production, demand, market potential, local and international trends, and other production factors. Further, it identifies industry clusters and market segments that hold potential as areas of innovation and market growth based on unique regional resources and centers of excellence. The industry clusters with such potential are:

- aerospace
- bio-products
- oceans
- education
- senior living and
- film & television

Results from Ramp Up! suggest that BC can build on recent economic successes and new regional initiatives to create a sustainable, regionally driven, economic roadmap. The roadmap has four major points:

- Natural resource clusters – Reduce dependency on this sector and identify new sustainable niche markets
- Technology driven clusters – Enhance the economic potential of these clusters by boosting the enabling environment to catalyze growth
- Other industry clusters – Identify new sectors that can leverage indigenous resources and diversify the economy and
- Enabling environment – Continue regulatory reform and regional economic development focus, improve provincial & regional collaboration and facilitate availability of start-up equity

Major economic development and diversification goals are: job and wage growth, lower unemployment and sector dependency, and retention/improved quality of life. To achieve these goals, the report suggests BC's regional economies should pursue eight integrated initiatives:

- set quantifiable and measurable economic and quality of life goals
- create management organization & regional frameworks
- develop regional cluster-based economic strategies
- establish a finance and innovation network serving regions
- create regional branding
- form a collaborative leadership institute
- implement a youth engagement strategy and
- build regional capacity to benchmark local economy and increase productivity

The report also outlines some key characteristics of BC's position within a rapidly globalizing economy. Continued reduction of export orientation and loss of export markets has resulted in reduced long-term global competitiveness and prosperity.

BC's natural resource sector is caught between two pressures: countries that can produce primary natural resource products at a lower cost, and the increasing commoditization of natural resource products traditionally considered to be value added. Over 70% of BC's GDP economy is dependent on the natural resource sector, exposing the economy to long-term global commodity pricing and industry trends which are negative for BC. Not only is BC a high-cost producer vis-à-vis international competitors, competitive pressures are being felt with lower cost producers now starting to produce secondary and tertiary value added products.

The technology sector is small and has some significant challenges to overcome in order to become a future driver of economic growth. Still, BC is perceived to have an attractive environment for technology companies, low operating costs, and high market potential. It is also well positioned in the fuel cell technology sector.

Continued acceleration of globalization will require that BC leverage its assets and geographic location to compete in the global economy. For example, Cariboo opportunities include:

- a well-educated workforce
- historical heritage
- transportation hub
- internationally recognized winter city
- off-shore oil and gas
- abundant and inexpensive outdoor recreation and
- affordable housing

Cariboo challenges include:

- geographic remoteness
- strong sense of isolation
- resource extraction dependency
- mountain pine beetle threat
- challenging weather and
- poor roads

The Cariboo has assets that can be leveraged to develop the forest product, bio-tech, and tourism opportunities identified in the study.

Connectivity and collaboration with other regions is vital for future economic growth. Province-wide and regional collaborative frameworks are needed to foster collaboration, manage shared investments, organize shared resources, and assure shared accountability for initiatives. The report presents a series of eight recommendations:

- Recommendation #1*** BC's regions should set quantifiable goals for economic and community development objectives to enable progress to be tracked.
- Recommendation #2*** Establish a province-wide private-public sector partnership to guide a BC economic development and diversification strategy, coordinate funding of regional initiatives, and oversee implementation of province-wide capability building.
- Recommendation #3*** Complete detailed regional asset mapping and industry cluster assessments to identify investment opportunities and focus 2010 economic development activities.
- Recommendation #4*** Establish a Finance and Innovation Network that supports development of climates of innovation in regions and links funding needs with funding providers to provide start-up and early stage equity financing in the regions.

- Recommendation #5*** Create branding strategies for each region.
- Recommendation #6*** Form a Collaborative Leadership Institute to develop skills of regional leaders.
- Recommendation #7*** Develop a youth engagement strategy to reverse youth brain drain from BC's regions and increase labour force participation rates.
- Recommendation #8*** Establish a regional capacity to benchmark and measure the regional economy in cooperation with BC Stats and the BC Progress Board.

Working Together to Create Sustainable Wealth

Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations Economic Strategies Initiative Final Report

The Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations (NWTT) is an association of First Nations groups in northern British Columbia. The NWTT's Economic Initiative Project aims to plan and develop an integrated and coordinated approach to northern economic development for member First Nations. The March 2005 report, *Working Together to Create Sustainable Wealth*, focuses on what will be necessary for First Nations in Northern BC to create sustainable wealth. It provides strategies, guidelines, and approaches to help address this question. The report examines basic dimensions of economic development, such as the need for capital, technology, and markets, as well as holistic characteristics which recognize that economic development must be guided by a vision for the future and grounded in values and connections to traditional territories.

Methodology:

The NWTT project team undertook to facilitate and improve working relationships among First Nations, governments, and business leaders in northern BC by hosting and attending an array of meetings, planning sessions, forums, and conferences. In addition to utilizing data from these sessions and from a large number of documents, a detailed questionnaire was used to collect information for the final economic strategy report. In total, 37 First Nations communities, representing 14,544 people, participated between November 2003 and January 2004. Information was collected about many aspects of the economy including: economic staff and structures, planning and business development activities, economic ventures, economic indicators in the community, barriers to economic growth, information technology capacity, and general information on economic matters.

Report Summary

**This is a condensed and edited version drawing from the original text.*

The Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations (NWTT) is comprised of 40 distinct First Nations from northwestern British Columbia. In December of 2002, the NWTT concluded an Economic Measures Agreement with the Treaty Negotiations Office of the Ministry of the Attorney General of British Columbia. The rationale for the agreement was to support the Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations to develop a First Nations Economic Strategy.

The major purpose of the NWTT economic initiative project is to plan and develop an integrated and coordinated approach to northern economic development for participating

First Nations. The primary goal of the NWTT economic strategy is to improve the quality of life for First Nations in the north through economic growth that creates high quality jobs, generates wealth and investment, supports self government, and helps to ensure the long-term fiscal health of the respective communities.

The report focuses on the fundamental question, “What will be necessary for First Nations in northern BC to create sustainable wealth?” and on providing strategies, guidelines, and approaches for the creation of this wealth. The report comprised of a brief report, a main report, and a set of appendices, examines eight areas requiring strategic action and change to enable First Nations to create sustainable wealth for themselves. These 8 areas include:

- Governance
- Access to lands and resources
- Planning capacity
- Human resource capacity
- Entrepreneurship
- Business & financial capacity
- Access to capital and
- Access to markets

Governance

Sound governance is an essential prerequisite to successful social and economic development. First Nation governments must have stability and must create a political environment that is safe and secure for business development. They must also be able to build confidence, attract commitment, and provide security of assets for companies doing business in the respective communities.

Access to lands and resources

Creating sustainable wealth for communities requires that First Nations reclaim and begin to utilize the resources on their traditional territories. This reclamation may take on various forms, including: land claim settlements, interim agreements, joint ventures where tenures of the resources are secured for economic purposes, or occupation and use of the land. The exercise of jurisdiction and utilization of these resources, and the management and utilization of these resources for their own benefit is essential to economic progress.

Planning capacity

Another vital stage for achieving sound governance is the ability to develop, initiate, complete, and implement sound fundamental planning processes. All too often, the examples of planning processes in First Nation communities are short term and program based; most having a one-year window for action and results. To create sustainable wealth, a multi-functional, comprehensive strategy of ongoing activities is necessary, in

contrast with individual economic development projects or other isolated attempts at community betterment.

Human resource capacity

A strong case can be made that a quiet crisis is building because of the low education attainment of First Nations. There is an increasing gap between the community's need for expertise, trained professionals, and technically skilled workers, and the production of them. Strategies must be implemented that have a renewed focus on increasing educational attainment from preschool through adult education. Human resource development efforts, such as education and training programs, must be complemented by a broad program of economic development at the regional and community levels. Without a supply of jobs, training makes little sense for those who are economically disadvantaged.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is fundamental for the creation of economic wealth. The challenge is to develop and foster an entrepreneurial community with an entrepreneurial attitude or imagination that visualizes how existing resources may be used to create new economic opportunity. The growth and development of entrepreneurship and subsequent entrepreneurial companies in First Nation communities requires more than just the provision of capital and training courses to develop entrepreneurial skills. It demands a supportive environment in which entrepreneurs can build their companies and flourish as respected members of the community. Entrepreneurial activity emerges when the conditions are right. Effective leadership, sound institutions with integrity, and strong business relations are needed to create these conditions.

Business & financial capacity

Most NWT communities are significantly limited in their human resource capacity to lead, support, and create economic diversification. There must be strategies to increase expertise and proficiency in financial and business operations. There also needs to be an organizational format in which the for-profit sectors of the community are independent and managed with sound business and financial principles, even though community government entities are closely linked to their work. Businesses cannot compete successfully when the decisions are being made according to political instead of business criteria.

Access to capital

Access to equity capital is essential to strengthening First Nation participation in the economy. There is a need for more capital overall, and for a broader scope of financing instruments to better respond to the needs of aspiring First Nation entrepreneurs. The large majority of opportunities for financial support for economic growth are piecemeal in nature coming from an ever-changing host of programs that are often poorly suited to

First Nation communities. A pool of equity capital designed specifically for this purpose is needed. In addition to new sources of equity capital, a focused effort by First Nations to accumulate and to retain capital, and a coordination of the vast array of regional programs so they have a community-based focus, are also needed.

Access to markets

In order to create sustainable wealth there must be recognition that key markets for selling products or services will most likely be somewhere outside the north and likely outside the province and country. Without a clear recognition of the market demand and price for the proposed products or services, many of the attempts at wealth creation will be based solely on the hope of markets and the interests or present capacity of the members of the respective First Nation communities. Most often these attempts in the creation of sustainable wealth fail. There must be a clear focus on creating access to markets for the products and services that First Nations plan to develop and produce.

Key Roles in the Implementation of the Economic Strategy

The NWTT economic strategy will benefit the entire northern BC region. The strategy recognizes that the respective First Nation and non-First Nation communities, and the surrounding regions, comprise a single economic region. A key goal of the strategy is to advance the economy of the First Nations of the north in a manner that also serves to benefit the economy of the entire region. No one community or institution can take on the breadth and depth of actions necessary to advance the economy of the North. It will take the collective know-how, skill, resources, and energy of the private sector, all orders of government including public institutions such as universities, colleges, and schools, and a collective of communities working in concert to achieve the goals articulated in this document. There must be an acceptance and willingness to engage in activity by the mainstream in collaboration with First Nation communities. This infers a positive collaboration process, and cooperative strategies, mechanisms, and institutions that reflect the diversity of communities within the region.

Role of NWTT

The NWTT role includes:

- providing leadership by insuring the First Nations economic strategy is continually moved forward
- coordinating economic development activities across the region
- continually working to build networks of support and cooperation
- pursuing larger scale business opportunities in cooperation with the communities in the region
- providing technical help and professional expertise when requested and
- helping communities build their own capacities by providing workshops, assisting community leadership, sharing best practices, and supporting planning processes

The strategy proposes the formation of a First Nations Economic Association or Institute to be created by the Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations. The Institute's role includes:

- providing ongoing direction to the implementation of the economic initiative strategy
- being a strong, unified voice to advocate and represent the First Nations interests to government, potential investors, regional and community organizations and to the multitude of other stakeholders and
- developing a work plan, establishing benchmarks, and monitoring and communicating success in advancing the First Nation economic strategy

The research has strongly indicated that in order for development to succeed, public policy must come to grips with First Nations having stewardship of their economies, and abandon acceptance of the present severely constrained land and resource base.

Role of Federal and Provincial Governments

Federal and provincial governments also have a role in the NWTT economic strategy, including:

- support of the recognition and implementation of treaty rights in the area of lands and resources
- encouragement, advocacy, facilitation, and support of the development steps and actions taken by First Nations in the creation of self-governing institutions
- provision of a broad policy framework within which First Nation communities and Nations can plan the development of their economies, develop the projects, implement, monitor, and change them if necessary
- program flexibility to allow First Nations to address development processes in their respective communities
- funding arrangement flexibility to enable First Nation communities to identify needs, design programs, fashion funding, and allocate funding to their own priorities rather than fitting spending into categories determined elsewhere, and to encourage and oblige leaders to be more accountable to community members
- stability in funding to develop programs for the longer term and
- funding levels sufficiently large to establish legitimacy, to generate excitement, to provide leverage, and to bring community leaders to the table and keep them there

Role of Mainstream Communities, Institutions, and Private Sector

Economic development of First Nation communities cannot occur in isolation from the rest of the Canadian, provincial, or regional economy. Until recently, First Nations overall participation in the Canadian economy has been marginal. All too often, local First Nations economies are invisible to the surrounding economies, although they are significant contributors to those economies. First Nations must participate in federal, provincial, and local economic planning mechanisms. The establishment of genuine

partnerships with the non-First Nation private sector has been very successful in some local communities and the development of further partnerships need to be encouraged and facilitated.

Non-First Nations roles in assisting First Nation communities and institutions move forward include:

- focusing and renewing commitment to increasing the participation and success rate of First Nation students through kindergarten to grade 12 and
- supporting a better fit between education and training for personal development and the needs of community economic development

Students need appropriate training available within the region and need to be directed towards academic programs in high demand positions like business and economic development. The major priority areas for development of First Nations expertise are:

- land and resource management
- the development of business activities based on lands and resources
- leadership training and
- community economic development workers

***The Connected North:
Moving from northern strength to northern strength***

A Report from the Northern BC Economic Vision and Strategy Project

UNBC's Northern BC Economic Development Vision and Strategy Project was designed to interact with northern residents to find out what ideas they had for improving economic development opportunities where they live. The resulting report, *The Connected North: Moving from northern strength to northern strength*, released in August 2004, examines key challenges and opportunities relative to the economic development and diversification of northern BC communities. It also includes a series of actionable recommendations aimed at creating mechanisms necessary to implement a northern economic development strategy.

Methodology:

The project team traveled throughout Northern BC to speak to individuals and groups in 2 separate rounds between September 2003 and March 2004. Community interviews, workshops and roundtables were held to gather information and develop recommendations for an economic development framework. Interviews covered four general topics: northern lifestyle, vision, strategies, and process.

Report Summary

** This is a condensed and edited version drawing from the original text.*

Over the past 200 years the social, economic, cultural, and political landscape of northern BC has undergone considerable transformation. The pace of change has accelerated over recent decades and communities, industries, businesses, and decision-makers recognize that this creates both new challenges and new opportunities. There is emerging recognition of the need to coordinate at a strategic level a vision and plan for guiding investment and assisting policy development and program implementation for the region. This report reflects the input from northerners about suggestions for renewing the community and economic foundation of northern BC. It draws from their sense of place and their experiences with the land and resources that have long sustained communities, businesses, and industries. They know northern BC and their suggestions and observations can play a valuable role in guiding development.

The Northern BC Economic Development Vision & Strategy Project provided a process whereby community and economic development stakeholders could provide input into the elements and desirability of a framework for collaborative strategic planning and implementation. The central question for the project was:

“If people in northern BC were going to devise a vision and plan for economic renewal and a structure to manage that renewal, how would they do it?”

This report confirms widespread interest in creating a framework for regional strategic discussions and outlines key ideas and principles which people considered important if this process is to work in the north.

Three messages drive this report:

- communities and economic futures are connected through resources infrastructure, technology, and the environment
- the region wants the capacity, resources, and tools to coordinate its community and economic future and
- this future must include all of the people and industries in the region, and must respect the quality of life and environmental foundations on which those people, places, and cultures are based

In terms of context, this project is different from previous economic planning exercises in that it addresses the need for Northern BC to think more collectively and broadly so that local places can coordinate at a strategic level to take advantage of new opportunities and create new competitive advantage. What constitutes northern BC? For the purposes of the Project, northern BC includes everything from 100 Mile House north to the Yukon, and from Alberta to the Pacific Ocean. Political relationships, economic flows, and a range of other commonalities link this region. Finally, why take a regional approach? Several factors support the need to take a regional approach. Other jurisdictions and competitors have shifted from local to regional approaches and from sectoral to ‘place-based’ policies; the private sector is already adopting a regional approach; limited infrastructure and services funds require that we invest wisely; and a regional voice has greater impact on public policy debates and the marketplace.

What should a northern BC strategic framework be about? According to people, businesses, community groups, and agencies across the region it should be about:

- constructing a shared foundation for region wide strategic discussions to support local planning processes
- developing synergies and a bottom-up generation of ideas and directions,
- building communication and collaboration and
- developing closer links between a wide range of strategic planning processes and partners

Part I – From Strength to Strength

Northern BC’s people and organizations expressed an urgent need for community and economic renewal. This sense of urgency is driven, in part, by the legacy of unresolved land claims and treaty negotiations, and has been accelerated by 25 years of uncoordinated economic restructuring. Their suggestions for moving forward with a

renewed community and economic strength builds on lifestyle issues, economic vision and strategy elements, and a range of options for ways to work more cooperatively between sectors and across the region.

Northern Lifestyles

In the new economy, quality of life and other rural and small town characteristics can now form its economic development assets. The small town characteristics of safe and familiar communities can provide an ideal setting for recruiting both young families and retirees. The northern pace and quality of life can be a foundation for economic development around outdoor lifestyles. With the connectivity of the 'information age', northern communities are attractive economic and quality of life destinations for companies seeking to relocate from expensive and congested metropolitan areas while still remaining 'plugged in' to the global economy.

The main issues relating to northern lifestyle are:

- landscape
- northerners
- communities
- economies and
- respect

People also identified three key aspects of change:

- Population: youthful First Nations population, aging non-aboriginal population, declines in rural and urban centres in the north
- Service reductions/consolidations: especially in health and education and
- Resource wealth that is draining out of the region and needs to be returned to renew the community and economic infrastructure

A Northern Vision: People, Environment, and Quality of Life

A northern economic vision is rooted in the interaction between people, the environment, and a high level of quality of life. The key elements of this vision include:

- diversity
- inclusivity
- cooperation
- lifestyle
- sustainability
- northern perspectives
- connections
- human resources
- a solid foundation for community development
- community development resources
- attitudes and

- a renewed regulatory framework

Strategic Directions: From Northern Strength to Northern Strength

A number of strategic directions and guiding principles for renewal have been identified, including:

- **Education and training** are key for capitalizing on changing opportunities
- **Community Capacity Building** is needed to support economic renewal diversification, and to meet the changing needs of industry and governance in the north
- **Youth Opportunities** in education and training, and jobs with opportunities for advancement
- **Economic Strength and Diversification** to ensure that more resource industry benefits accrue to northerners
- **Financing, Investment, and Funding** that works for the north
- **Infrastructure** improvements for both physical and human capacity issues
- **Marketing and Branding** that values northern BC's characteristics and creates new opportunities in new markets
- **A Collective Voice** to increase the visibility of the region in policy debates and the marketplace
- **Partnerships in Decision-Making** within and between communities and sub-regions
- **A Framework** that is northern based and recognizes community assets and aspirations
- **A Northern Context** that recognizes the 'quadruple bottom line' of economy, society, environment, and culture
- **Support Mechanisms** that make efficient use of existing economic development tools/institutions and builds on the community development supports at our educational institutions and
- **Building Blocks for Community Development** that include tools to create economic and community knowledge

These principles can be directed to:

- physical infrastructure
- human resource infrastructure
- community capacity infrastructure and
- economic and business infrastructure

A Northern BC Regional Development Model: Getting on With the Job

The community interviews and workshops explored appropriate models or vehicles to create a regional forum for discussing strategic options respecting community and economic development. Key lessons from other jurisdictions and examples include:

- the importance of a vision to guide directions

- the need for clear goals
- the need for a clear mandate and management structure
- the need for strong linkages at the local and regional level and
- the need to adopt a long term approach

People and groups across the region also want less connection with federal/provincial government structures. They need a bottom-up mechanism to coordinate strategic economic development investments with the financial resources to accomplish its tasks. They also want this structure to be inclusive of community, economic, and government interests and input, but be built around respectful participation.

Principles

A wide range of principles to help guide the development of a Northern BC regional development model have been suggested, including:

- **Institutional Stability** that will survive external change
- **Representation** that is inclusive and involves participation from community economic interests, governments, First Nations, and the private sector
- **A Governance structure** that is small and flexible, perhaps with a small board supported by a small staff, linked to governance functions at the federal and provincial level
- **Roles and Responsibilities** that enable effective northern participation in the economy
- **Funding** sources that are secure and demonstrate buy-in from partners
- **Location** of the Council in the north, including a presence in each of four sub-regions in order to enhance access, visibility, and accountability and
- An **Effectiveness** so that northern views and concerns are incorporated into federal and provincial policy development and program implementation around regional economic development

Part II – Building Blocks

The second part of the report recognizes that there already exists a wide range of tools and resources for economic development and renewal, but they need to be used more wisely. One of the mechanisms for coordination of these tools and resources is recognition by communities that the region is connected by a defined set of corridors through which transportation, settlement, communications, and energy flow.

Innovation and Opportunities for Northern BC

Community and economic interests across northern BC identified a range of sectoral options for economic diversification to mitigate impacts of market fluctuations. Some of the most often suggested options include:

- tourism
- aquaculture
- forestry
- agriculture
- recreation
- retirement
- energy
- transportation
- minerals
- education and
- services

People wanted a coordinated regional economic development framework through which discussion could take place about options for repackaging and accessing existing assets.

Opportunities for new potential were also identified, in:

- seniors' services
- tourism
- new information technology
- small town quality of life
- the hydrogen economy
- innovations in the resource sector, including inter-sectoral linkages
- alternative energy sources and completion of the power grid in the region, and
- education based activities

To do this, the region's economic strengths may need to be re-bundled to create innovative clusters based on knowledge and skills.

Community Economic Development Resources

An impressive array of community economic development resources exist across northern BC, including community planning documents, economic development strategy documents, land and resource plans, and reports encapsulating human resources and knowledge needs and assets. A mechanism to access and share this information is needed.

Community Economic Development Institutions

As with economic development resources, an impressive array of community economic development institutions also exists across the region. Many of these institutions function at local and regional levels and collectively they cover many of the pressure areas experienced by small and large businesses alike, and by aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. In support of these community and regional based organizations are a host of federal and provincial government offices including line-departments and ministries,

as well as crown corporations and agencies. Again, people did not wish to re-invent the wheel, but instead find a way to facilitate the communication and coordination needed to make effective use of all these resources.

Recommendations:

The major recommendations identified in this report include:

- Settle treaties in a fair and timely fashion
- Complete the electrical power grid across the region to facilitate new economic development opportunities in northern BC
- Move forward with the next steps in discussions about creating some form of a Northern BC Regional Development Council
- Direct Funding to “Potential Actionable Items” as identified through the community meetings
- Move on the various suggestions for a Resource Revenue Sharing arrangement with the region’s aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and
- Greater cooperative and coordinated policy development within and between all levels of aboriginal and non-aboriginal government to support economic and community development across the region

Appendix

(Contact information for the three summarized Northern BC Economic Development Reports)

Halseth, G; Lax, L; Manson, D; Markey, S.; Buttar, O. (July 30, 2004). THE CONNECTED NORTH: Moving from Northern Strength to Northern Strength: A Report from the Northern BC Economic Vision and Strategy Project July 30, 2004. <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg/research/edvs/projectReports.html>

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Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations. (March 2005) Economic Strategies Initiative Final Report: Working Together to Create Sustainable Wealth. [http://www.nwtgroup.com/documents/ReportNWTT%20\(r4\).pdf](http://www.nwtgroup.com/documents/ReportNWTT%20(r4).pdf)