

1. CONNECTING INCENTIVES TO VEHICLE BATTERY RECYCLING PROGRAMS

Issue

BC has made significant commitments to electrification of passenger and some light-industrial vehicles. Canada has also proposed regulations that indicate one-fifth of all passenger cars, SUVs and trucks sold in Canada in 2026 will need to operate on electricity.

Battery lifespans are estimated to last between 10-20 years. Electric vehicles have been on the market for close to 10 years already and some already require battery recycling. The batteries will then need to be recycled. The issue remains that there are limited battery recycling facilities across Canada.¹ As a result, the Provincial and Federal Government should investigate how many more recycling facilities will be needed and determine which communities to target.

Background

Canada has proposed one-fifth of all passenger cars, SUVs and trucks sold in Canada in 2026 will need to run on electricity. Under new regulations proposed by Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, 60 per cent of all vehicle sales will be EVs by 2030 and every passenger vehicle sold in Canada will need to be electric by 2035.²

BC passed the Zero-Emission Vehicles Act (ZEV Act³) on May 30, 2019. The ZEV Act requires automakers to meet an escalating annual percentage of new light-duty ZEV sales and leases, reaching: 10% of light-duty vehicle sales by 2025, 30% by 2030 and 100% by 2040. To increase uptake of electric vehicles, BC has also provided other incentives to consumers through the Go Electric Program.⁴

While these investments and targets are heavily debated, it is noted that many people are purchasing electric vehicles since a record 86,032 electric vehicles were registered in Canada in 2021, making up 5.3% of total vehicle registrations for that year. In comparison, there were 56,165 electric vehicles registrations (2.9% of total registrations) in 2019 and 19,696 (1% of total registrations) in 2017.⁵

Over the years, these electric vehicles will undergo wear and tear, and their batteries will need to be recycled. It is estimated that the car battery's life expectancy is 10-20 years.⁶

Recycling is also important since lithium, nickel and cobalt are scarce resources. The lithium, nickel and cobalt can be theoretically recycled limitlessly.

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/electric-vehicle-battery-recycling-1.6695010>

² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-ev-mandates-2026-1.6693967>

³ <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/19029>

⁴ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation-energies/clean-transportation-policies-programs/clean-energy-vehicle-program>

⁵ [https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/market-snapshots/2022/market-snapshot-record-high-electric-vehicle-sales-canada.html#:~:text=Release%20date%3A%202022%2D10%2D26&text=A%20record%2086%2C032%20electric%20vehicles,of%20total%20registrations\)%20in%202017.](https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/market-snapshots/2022/market-snapshot-record-high-electric-vehicle-sales-canada.html#:~:text=Release%20date%3A%202022%2D10%2D26&text=A%20record%2086%2C032%20electric%20vehicles,of%20total%20registrations)%20in%202017.)

⁶ <https://www.jdpower.com/cars/shopping-guides/how-long-do-electric-car-batteries-last>

According to market analysts, a combined total of over 180,000 tonnes of lithium, cobalt, nickel and manganese could be recovered by 2030 through Li-ion recycling, a value which is forecast to grow by approximately 10x by 2042 worldwide.⁷

While Canada hasn't pledged federal funding for recycling EV batteries, the U.S. is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on recycling projects. The U.S. Senate also just passed a bill to increase EV battery recycling, which could soon be signed into law.⁸

Canada needs to step up and invest in battery recycling.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Commission a study and action plan for the implementation of electric vehicle battery recycling plants we will need per region⁹; and,
2. Invest in innovating current electric vehicle battery recycling plants to increase their capacity.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

2. ENHANCING TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES AND LEGISLATION TO CREATE LIVABLE CITIES

Issue

Governments across the world have made substantial efforts to combat climate change, from banning the sale of combustion-engine vehicles¹⁰, to investing in active transportation¹¹. Transportation is the largest single contributor to BC's greenhouse gas emissions so change in the sector is essential. Although these programs will result in an important move away from oil and gas-powered vehicles and towards sustainable modes of transportation such as using electric vehicles, transit systems, biking or walking, policy and legislation must change to reach the true potential of sustainable transportation systems. Cyclists are offered minimal protection in the BC Motor Vehicle Act and as a result, many residents are held back from adopting active transportation alternatives to single-passenger vehicles. This will result in the BC Government falling short of its Vision Zero and climate goals.

⁷ <https://www.mining.com/how-much-could-battery-recycling-actually-aid-cobalt-lithium-supply-shortages/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20market%20analyst,by%20approximately%2010x%20by%202042.>

⁸ <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/ev-battery-recycling-senate-romney-ndaa/639317/>

⁹ The geographical regions of Canada are groupings of provinces and territories established for the purpose of statistical reporting. The six geographical regions of Canada are: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia, and Territories

¹⁰ <https://driving.ca/column/motor-mouth/motor-mouth-canada-moves-to-ban-internal-combustion-engines-by-2035>

¹¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/funding-engagement-permits/funding-grants/active-transportation-infrastructure-grants#:~:text=The%20B.C.%20Active%20Transportation%20Infrastructure%20Grants%20Program%20provides%20guidance%20and,roll%20using%20active%20transportation%20modes.>

There is also little investment in micromobility, which is the general term for fleets of small, low-speed vehicles (primarily bikes and scooters) for personal transportation, which can be either human powered or electric or a combination of the two. Micromobility is primarily found in urban areas and used for short trips in areas with good connectivity and a density of destinations.

Background

Motor Vehicle Act

BC's Motor Vehicle Act (the MVA) as its name suggests, was written with motorists in mind. Rules for cyclists were largely confined to a section titled "Bicycles and Play-vehicles." The MVA was passed in 1957 and has changed surprisingly little since. The transportation environment has evolved since 1957.

Without adequate safety measures legislated, there will be a hesitation for users currently in single-passenger vehicles to switch to bicycles and other active transportation modes. The Motor Vehicle Act needs to be adjusted.

Active Transportation and Micromobility Investments

The B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program provides guidance and cost-sharing for B.C. communities to make it easier and safer for people to walk, ride or roll using active transportation modes. It can take many forms and is continually evolving as new technologies emerge. It includes:

1. Walking.
2. Cycling.
3. Rolling (skateboarding, in-line skating).
4. Other emerging modes that are legal in B.C.

The program provides cost-sharing opportunities for network planning grants and infrastructure grants. Funding from these grant programs support the development of active transportation infrastructure for all ages and abilities.

These investments are welcomed and well utilized by communities but there is a lack of investment in concepts such as cycle highways¹² or micromobility modes of transportation. In fact, the grants are vastly oversubscribed, showing a high demand from municipalities to implement cycling networks, and inadequate supply of cost-share funding from higher levels of government. Micromobility serves as a first/last mile option that is faster than hailing a taxi, walking, or transferring to low-frequency transit. Typical micromobility trips are about 1-3 miles, but some trips can be as long as 10 miles, especially when aided by electric drive. Micromobility vehicles rarely transport more than one person at a time.

Bikesharing and scooter sharing are methods of transportation that can be implemented in many cities across BC, which will cut congestion, increase health, and reduce GHG emissions¹³. But these industries are unable to fully integrate into a city when there is little incentive for local governments to include

¹² <https://bikehub.ca/research/making-the-case-for-cycle-highways-in-metro-vancouver>

¹³ <https://nabsa.net/2022/04/25/climatesustainability/>

their operations as they develop community plans. The 2023 Surrey Road Survey showed that 49.4% of people want bike share but need routes to be safer before they would shift to using it.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Follow the recommendation in the BC Road Safety Law Reform Group Position Paper¹⁴ to amend the Motor Vehicle Act by:
 - a) Clarifying the rights and duties of road users to improve understanding and compliance and reduce conflict between all road user groups.
 - b) Acknowledging the fundamental differences between road user groups' capabilities and vulnerabilities and recognizing the increased risks faced by more vulnerable classes of road users.
 - c) Aligning the law with best practices for safer road use by vulnerable road users.
 - d) Reducing the likelihood of a collision involving a vulnerable road user.
 - e) Prioritizing enforcement of laws that target activities most likely to result in collisions, injuries and fatalities.
 - f) Reducing the likely severity of injuries resulting from collisions involving vulnerable road users.
2. Create an enabling policy environment for micro mobility businesses to operate in micro mobility such as e-scooters and e-bikes so that municipalities can easily adopt them.
3. Increase BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant funding to \$100 million/year to better match municipal government demand.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

3. COMMITTING TO VERTICAL GROWTH – THE NEXT PHASE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Issue

Farming is an expensive career path. Youth are finding it increasingly difficult to access funds to pursue farming even when their families have been farming for generations. Fewer farmers builds food insecurity and raises the price of food with broader economic implications.

Many regions across BC are facing land shortages. This issue is exemplified in the Lower Mainland, but it permeates throughout the entire province. With a growing population, more land is being set aside for housing, limiting agricultural land capacity.

With the increased difficulty in entering the traditional farming sector, and the advent of technological advancements, municipalities across the province need to capitalize on innovative growing practices that are both space-saving and highly productive. One option is vertical growing in light-industrial zones. By utilizing industrial areas as well as traditional agricultural zones, there is opportunity for newer technologies to produce more than what was possible on traditional agricultural land.

Background

Cost of Farmland Across BC

¹⁴ https://bikehub.ca/sites/default/files/modernizing_the_bc_motor_vehicle_act_nov_2017_1.pdf

The price of land has been increasing dramatically across the province. Following a shocking 18.1% average increase in 2021, the average price continued to rise in 2022, on average 8%. In the Kootenay region, farmland values rose by a record 33.6% in 2022, the greatest regional rate of change in Canada. The South Coast region, which contains Metro Vancouver, holds the record for the highest average farmland values across Canada at \$139,000 per acre.¹ With farmland near urban centres highly sought after for hobby farmers, rural residents, and investments, the high cost of land makes it difficult for agricultural businesses to turn a profit. New farmers in the region are often leasing land, without the ability to own.

The Cariboo-Chilcotin region saw an 11.1% increase in farmland values between 2021 and 2022, while the Peace Region-Northern B.C. had a 6.6% increase over the same period, with the highest quality land going for a premium. A few years ago, new farmers could reliably relocate north to purchase land and escape Southern B.C. real estate hotspots, they are now finding themselves priced out of the market all across the province.

The Okanagan region, driven by its wine production and orchards, increased a further 14.3% between 2021 and 2022, with a top value per acre of up to \$95,800 per acre.

Food Insecurity

The inability for new farmers to enter the market due to exorbitant land costs, and the fact that other countries are able to produce for much cheaper adds to the food insecurity problem. High prices may drive people away from consuming locally even though there is a market for people who want to consume locally produced goods.

Population growth in BC will also increase the amount of food consumed in BC. It is projected that there will be an annual population growth of 1.2% in BC from 2019 to 2041. The highest growth areas will be the Mainland/Southwest, which includes Vancouver, Burnaby, the Tri-Cities, Richmond, New Westminster, Surrey, White Rock, Langley, and Abbotsford. The other highest growth area is the Nechako region.

BRITISH COLUMBIA POPULATION BY DEVELOPMENT REGION

Development Regions	Population as at July 1st (000s)			Average annual growth 2019- 2041
	2019	2030	2041	
Van Isle/Coast	828	956	1,018	0.8%
Mainland/Southwest	3,093	3,608	4,072	1.4%
Thompson Okanagan	590	653	701	0.9%
Kootenay	160	166	165	0.1%
Cariboo	166	174	174	0.2%
North Coast	59	64	65	0.5%
Nechako	41	48	54	1.4%
Northeast	72	80	84	0.7%
B.C. Total	5,050	5,750	6,334	1.2%

Source: BC Stats

Innovation

Food and agriculture innovation have generated remarkable amounts of investor capital in recent years and could become a \$700 billion market globally by 2030, according to a Union Bank of Switzerland.¹⁵ One innovative form of (add in 'urban'?) farming includes vertical farming.

Vertical farming is a new form of farming that allows for the production of crops, primarily leafy greens, on minimal land space. This farming method uses the concept of controlled environment agriculture, and stacks production space upon itself like a high-rise building.¹⁶ These buildings may be new, purpose built, or renovation of disused older structures.

Vertical farms must overcome the financial challenge of large start-up costs. Since they can be located in the centers of major cities, owners of vertical farms would have to pay the occupancy costs that any other office in the same zone would have to pay if zoned the same. A vertical farm with a yield per hectare factor 50 times larger than a traditional outdoor farm's yield, may take 6-7 years to break even¹⁷.

And because profitability is so elusive, some of the early promises of high-tech urban agriculture and vertical systems are slowly being realized. Steep start-up costs mean farmers must grow crops that generate major cash: specialty items, such as flowers, or food crops that have quick growth cycles, such as leafy greens. The five main indoor crops that are currently grown in a vertical farm are leafy greens, microgreens, herbs, flowers and tomatoes – although these are rare – items that are a pull for those of high socioeconomic status but aren't go-to products for low-income people.

Additional potential benefits of vertical farms include:

- Close integration of agricultural amenities into urban planning with agricultural capacity scalable to urban growth, cycling of organic resources, reduction or elimination of "food deserts", increase in local employment, and revitalization of urban areas in decline¹⁸

Moving forward

With SFU launching the urban agriculture program and KPU's existing horticulture, agriculture and food-system programs, the ongoing dialogues about local food security combined with the ALR challenges, there's already a convergence occurring around making food systems more compact and efficient, which Surrey could use as a launching pad for pitching the eco-industrial "discovery" park and the vertical farm. This could be the location of a pilot project. The potential could be realized across the province but to start, there needs to be an investment from the Province, Municipal, and Federal Governments.

¹⁵ <https://www.ubs.com/global/en/ubs-society/our-stories/2019/future-of-food.html>

¹⁶ Birkby, Jeff (January 2016). "[Vertical Farming](#)". *ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program*. Retrieved October 28, 2019.

¹⁷ Benke, Kurt; Tomkins, Bruce (2017-01-01). "Future food-production systems: vertical farming and controlled-environment agriculture". *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*. **13** (1): 13–26. doi:[10.1080/15487733.2017.1394054](https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2017.1394054)

¹⁸ Fraser, Bud (2010), Ch. 15 Integrated Infrastructure for Local Food and Agriculture, "Agricultural Urbanism" 1st Ed. HB Lanarc Consultants Ltd.

Vertical farms can and have happened in major city centres.^{19 20 21} Municipal governments could move this new discipline forward if they can be encouraged to broaden their land designations/zoning categories. Currently in many municipalities, farming can only occur on designated farming land. This however needs to be amended to allow innovation such as vertical farming to develop.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Work with municipal and federal government to allocate funding for innovative research in vertical farming;
2. Ensure that vertical farming can occur on ALR land without the need for rezoning;
1. Work with municipalities to ensure that vertical farming can occur in light-industrial zones by amending land designations, with the stipulation that land is not ALR space being rezoned; and,
2. Set up a task force to develop the project with relevant stakeholders.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

4. FOCUS ON YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Issue

Given persistently high rates of youth unemployment in British Columbia—at 8.6%²², three percent higher than the national average²³—preparing youth to follow an entrepreneurial path is not only an acceptable choice, but also a strategic decision. There are programs in B.C. and in Canada that introduce youth to career paths, but there is not enough focus on developing practical entrepreneurial skills. It will take the combined support and involvement from all sectors, including businesses, to address the need for more support to develop B.C. and Canada’s future business owners.

Background

Surrey is a young, rapidly growing city with one third of its population under the age of 19. While this is a source of strength, it creates challenges in key areas such as programs and services, education, health, outreach, housing and the job market. Statistics show that youth unemployment and underemployment is rising, and entry-level wages do not cover the cost of living. The Surrey Board of Trade (SBoT) has a Youth Entrepreneurship and Advocacy Action Plan, which is led by a team of youth and business leaders. The goal of the Action Plan is to combat unemployment, promote entrepreneurship and improve economic prospects for Surrey youth through targeted services, events, programming and mentorship.

¹⁹ <https://makinglewes.org/category/eco-industrial-parks/>

²⁰ <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/centennial-college-and-utsc-are-planning-canadas-first-net-zero-vertical-farm/>

²¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/11/19/indoor-farming-is-one-decades-hottest-trends-regulations-make-success-elusive/>

²² https://ycharts.com/indicators/british_columbia_youth_unemployment_rate

²³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200110/dq200110a-eng.htm>

A Surrey Vital Signs Report surveyed Surrey youth aged 12 to 24, which showed that older youth overwhelmingly felt they had not received adequate life skills training in their elementary and secondary years and were unsure of their ability to successfully transition out of school into stable fulfilling employment. With this in mind, a key component of the SBoT strategy is to empower local elementary and secondary teachers to effectively teach entrepreneurship. Through a partnership with PowerPlay Strategies, a Surrey-based company that specializes in entrepreneurial education for youth, educators have been provided with turnkey resources and training. The customized solution also includes meaningful mentorship opportunities with the local business community.

PowerPlay Young Entrepreneurs is a curriculum-based program for grades 4-8 classrooms. Each individual student creates a real business by developing a business plan, product and marketing materials. They get loans, make sales and donate a portion of their profits to charity. This authentic, hands-on learning experience has proven to be highly engaging for all types of learners. Students develop practical entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, critical thinking and communications that can support them in all areas of life. They also discover that entrepreneurship is a viable career path.

Surrey Board of Trade also leads a second PowerPlay program called Project Enterprise in secondary school classrooms. Students develop real social enterprises and discover their ability to be change makers. They redefine success in business from an exclusive focus on profits to one that prioritizes people, the planet and profits. Whether coming up with a product that is environmentally friendly or addresses a social issue, students are encouraged to innovate and think outside the box. They conceptualize product ideas, develop prototypes and complete a market test. Again, this real-world approach to learning helps young people develop an entrepreneurial mindset that is needed in a highly competitive marketplace.

Together the Surrey Board of Trade and PowerPlay Strategies have created a model that can be easily adopted in other communities. In fact, the Surrey Board of Trade has been focused on entrepreneurial strategies for youth for the past 10 years.

With half of all owners of small and medium-sized business in Canada retiring in the next decade and youth unemployment more than double the rate of older age groups, entrepreneurship is an opportunity for youth to create jobs for themselves and others, generating tax revenue and producing the products and services that will play a vital role in our economic success. We need more of them. Corporations need to stop simply providing jobs and instead incubate entrepreneurial talent.

On a global scale, there are 21.2% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were unemployed in 2018.²⁴ These are the young people we should be worried about, but they're also the ones entrepreneurship can help save. The time for our governments to invest in creating and supporting youth entrepreneurship programs is now, because as scary as those unemployment figures are, they're only set to climb higher, according to findings from the G20 Youth Entrepreneurs' Alliance.²⁵

Giving young people a real opportunity to gain control over the direction of their lives can reduce the malaise anxiety and hopelessness that permeates communities with vast numbers of unemployed

²⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2019-briefing-no-125/>

²⁵ <https://www.g20yea.com/>

youth. With basic business education and access to microloans, the economic ecosystem of whole communities can change drastically: small businesses create local jobs and keep capital circulating in communities.²⁶

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) developed a Policy Guide on Youth Entrepreneurship.²⁷ The report builds on previous work by UNCTAD and recognizes the specific needs of young people. In summary, the five recommendations include:

Optimizing the regulatory environment – Ensuring that regulations do not in themselves present barriers, the recommendations are to balance regulation and standards with development objectives, introduce transparency and ease of access through “one stop shop” bundling of business registration, etc. Overall, the purpose is to simplify regulations where it makes sense.

Enhancing entrepreneurship education and skills development – The recommendation is to begin introducing entrepreneurship awareness from the beginning of the school experience. Similar to the program that SBOT uses, educational programming from kindergarten through to post-secondary, would provide experiential, hands-on training that incorporates external mentors and would include a variety of opportunities including trades, apprenticeships, innovation, and other extra-curricular programs. Some of this has been included in the language for the new B.C. K-12 curriculum; however, there is opportunity to expand.

Facilitating technology exchange and innovation – Information and communication technologies (ICT) are critical for any new business venture and is a particular challenge for marginalized young people (socio-economic barriers, remote locations, etc.). Incubators, research and development labs, knowledge hubs, education-industry collaboration and business mentorship are but a few ways that ICT challenges can be overcome. An appropriate policy would also include a mechanism to facilitate youth-led businesses connecting with potential clients/customers.

Improving access to finance – Challenges such as age restrictions and low financial literacy levels can be overcome by developing youth-friendly financial products, including flexible loans or a credit bureau, increasing financial inclusion, and recognizing public-private partnerships as a means of collateral for a start-up. Business mentoring should be seen as an invaluable resource for young entrepreneurs and should be encouraged.

Promoting awareness and networking – The hardest challenge for a young entrepreneur is to overcome negative attitudes and to connect with a supportive environment to foster their development. Businesses, along with governments, can jointly elevate the value of entrepreneurial programs, encourage and support peer networks, utilize media platforms to celebrate success, and to promote investments. Much of this is incorporated in the SBOT programs described above.

The recommendations through the UN report encompass both provincial and federal jurisdictions and will require collaboration between those governments and businesses to ensure that the business

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2019-briefing-no-125/>

²⁷ <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=1404>

owners and employers of tomorrow are given the best tools to succeed. The best time to start is in the primary grades.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government

1. Work with the Federal Government to create a comprehensive youth entrepreneurship strategy.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

5. BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

Issue

The Internet's second blockchain era will produce even more upheaval than the Internet's first information era. It is an unstoppable force that will make itself felt in almost every facet of our lives. Canada has a head start on becoming the second era's global hub or, at least, one of a handful of such hubs. We need a tech corridor in British Columbia to connect with the Digital Technology Supercluster in Ontario. The Greater Toronto region is already a world leader in quantum physics and artificial intelligence. Blockchain is ideally placed to be the third leg of the Tech North stool.

Still, Canada needs to overcome significant obstacles if it is to cement a leadership role in blockchain technology. A key handicap is the absence of a clearly defined strategy for governments and other stakeholders to exploit blockchain technology. For example, governments focus on investing in related technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing while missing the critical underlying blockchain infrastructure.

Background

Blockchain is a distributed ledger in which anything of value can be stored, ranging from money, stocks, bonds and intellectual property, to votes, art, music, loyalty points, carbon credits, health-care records and student accomplishments. Even our identities can be stored, transacted, communicated and managed securely and privately.²⁸

The First Industrial Revolution occurred in Europe and the US where a transition to new manufacturing processes occurred between 1760-1840. The traditional hand-processing methods were coopted using machines, chemical, steam, and water.

The Second Industrial Revolution, known as the Technological Revolution, was a phase of rapid industrialization between the late 19th century and early 20th century. Advancements in manufacturing and production technology were the staple of the Second Industrial Revolution, and the invention of things such as the telegraph, railroad network, gas and water supply, and sewage systems.

²⁸ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/how-canada-can-be-a-global-leader-in-blockchain-technology/article34259697/>

The Third Industrial Revolution involved the utilization of new energy with communication technologies, mainly renewable electricity. This third phase of the industrial revolution includes the sharing economy and details the interconnection of the world's economies.

We are now in and moving away from the fourth industrial revolution, known as the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This is the name given to the current trend of automation and data exchanges. The increasingly complex and sophisticated cyber-physical systems, the Internet of things, cloud computing, and cognitive computing are all facets of the fourth industrial revolution. Within this revolution is the advent of blockchain technology.

The uses of blockchain technology, which is a primary facet of cloud computing and the internet of things, is a relatively new way of exchanging information and services but is already revolutionizing global trade.²⁹

Blockchain is a concept for storing data. It is a decentralized and secure trust between parties. The blockchain can be seen as a type of digital ledger that holds information about transactions in a register that is transparent and accessible. Once information is entered into a "block", it can't be altered, only added to. Multiple data entries, or blocks, create a chain of blocks (i.e. blockchain). Once information is uploaded to a block, all parties involved are made aware of this.

A trade chain can be seen as a long and complicated series of transactions. Time is critical for much trade, including agricultural trade across the country and across international borders. As agricultural items are perishable, time is crucial for trade. Delays in terms of information sharing are detrimental to the goods, and therefore, the economy on both the importer and exporter's side. Utilizing blockchain will speed up the transaction speed and thus limit the number of spoiled items. In a society that is trying to reduce waste, blockchain technology is one way to accomplish this goal.

Canadian entrepreneurs and companies are on the leading edge of blockchain innovation. Ethereum, viewed by some as the most important blockchain company in the world, recently surpassed \$228.45 billion (U.S.)³⁰ in value. Consensus Systems is building decentralized applications that could transform several industries, including financial services, professional services, manufacturing, telecommunications, music and film. Many of the bitcoin core developers are Canadian and work in the start-up community. A growing constellation of entrepreneurs and technologists (e.g., Paycase, Protocol Fund, Tendermint, Nuco, Smartwallet, BlockStream, etc.) are trying to build the future with companies in Toronto, Surrey, Vancouver, Montreal and elsewhere.

To cement Canada's position as a global leader in blockchain technology, the following steps need to be taken:

²⁹ Norberg, Hanna C., "Unlocking the Bottlenecks and Making the Global Supply Chain Transparent: How blockchain technology can update global trade." *Canadian Global Affairs Institute and the School*, 2019. https://www.cgai.ca/unlocking_the_bottlenecks_and_making_the_global_supply_chain_transparent_how_blockchain_technology_can_update_global_trade?utm_campaign=norberg_spp_blockchain&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cdfai

³⁰ https://ycharts.com/indicators/ethereum_market_cap

Stimulating Research And Development (R&D) Through Blockchain-Based Flow-Through Shares

The report explains how the flow-through shares model that has been effective in Canada's mining, oil and gas industries could be applied to technology. The key is to use blockchain to track all investments, real-time in R&D to ensure all tax benefits go directly into innovation. This would offer Canada a double-barrelled opportunity: a massive new source of funds to spur research and development in the technology sector, and a highly visible, real-time demonstration of blockchain's capabilities and benefits.

Create a Blockchain Research Institute & Centre of Excellence

It's time to conduct deep research into killer applications – identifying the most important opportunities for blockchain in business and government and drawing the road map for how to get there. Canada needs a Blockchain Research Institute, to unlock the potential of blockchain across industries and also within the functions of organizations. The institute could operate as a research centre for projects that potentially benefit a wide range of players, and where competitive issues are not a concern.

Round-table participants and others expressed strong support for a Blockchain Centre of Excellence. The centre would not be dissimilar to those that have helped propel many other emerging technologies; however, new thinking is required. For example, it would be the focal point for a cluster of a set of blockchain-related businesses, encouraging them to feed off each other.

A Centre of Excellence exists in Eastern Canada, but the findings and utilization ends there. The Western provinces and territories do not participate in a meaningful way in this Centre. That is why the West needs to create a centre itself. One founded in BC would be most effective since the Government of BC already utilizes blockchain through the Verified Organization Network (VON)³¹

Government As A Model User

One of the most important steps government can take is to adopt the technology to transform its own operations – federal, provincial and local. This stimulates innovation, creates a stronger domestic market for entrepreneurs and among other things could dramatically improve the performance of government.

Multiple levels of government have moved toward using blockchain for permits, including the Government of Ontario, the City of Toronto and the Government of British Columbia³². In 2018, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat; and the National Research Council Canada (NRCC) all utilized blockchain for one reason or another as an experiment. While the experiment is not ongoing, this work has provided “constructive insight into the potential for this technology and how it may be used for more open and transparent operations for public programs”.³³

³¹ <https://decentralized-id.com/government/canada/bcgov/von/hgf-2018-production-government-deployment-hyperledger-indy/>

³² Urban, M. C. a <https://decentralized-id.com/government/canada/bcgov/von/hgf-2018-production-government-deployment-hyperledger-indy/>nd Pineda, D. (2018). *Inside the black blocks: A policymaker's introduction to blockchain, distributed ledger technology and the "internet of value."* Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation, University of Toronto. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/99417>

³³ National Research Council Canada. (2018). [Exploring blockchain for better business. Government of Canada.](https://nrc.canada.ca/en/stories/exploring-blockchain-better-business) <https://nrc.canada.ca/en/stories/exploring-blockchain-better-business>

British Columbia has been investing in this expedition through DigiBC.³⁴ They have used Verifiable Credentials for People by utilizing Hyperledger INDY and ARIES. This has resulted in three project demonstrations: Safe Entry BC³⁵; Conference Book³⁶; and Chat Server³⁷. Although the results are important, we need to enhance this through partnerships with the private sector and encourage its application across all businesses.

Expand Access To The United States And Our Other Trading Partners

Building an innovation economy in Canada does not mean isolating ourselves from the rest of the world. Indeed, with calls for protectionism growing louder in countries such as the United States and Britain, we must build bridges and strengthen ties to key markets, expand our trading partners and work constructively with foreign governments.

Given Canada's relatively small domestic market, it is vital for the blockchain community to expand access to the United States. The U.S. is by far the largest source of financing for blockchain start-ups, the biggest market for their products and, outside Canada, the biggest supplier of talent for blockchain and other fintech ventures.

Education And Cultural Change

Revolutionary products and services often run into early skepticism, even mockery and hostility. Entrenched interests resist change and established leaders are often the last to embrace the new, if they ever do. Blockchain is no exception. It has already brought dislocation, conflict, confusion and uncertainty, and is sure to bring more. This is especially true in Canada, where regulators and policy makers have tended to favour stability over innovation.³⁸

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Create a Blockchain Centre of Excellence and Research Institute in BC where blockchain-related businesses can cluster and innovate; and

That the Federal Government:

2. Stimulating R&D through blockchain-based flow-through shares that would track all investments in real-time in R&D to ensure all tax benefits go directly into innovation;
3. Incorporating best practices conducive to establishing innovation in this growing field.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

6. TRANSITIONING WORKERS TO FULL EMPLOYMENT

Issue

³⁴ <https://digital.gov.bc.ca/digital-trust/>

³⁵ <https://digital.gov.bc.ca/digital-trust/projects-and-initiatives/safe-entry-bc-demo/>

³⁶ <https://digital.gov.bc.ca/digital-trust/projects-and-initiatives/conference-book-demo/>

³⁷ <https://digital.gov.bc.ca/digital-trust/projects-and-initiatives/chat-server-demo/>

³⁸ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/how-canada-can-be-a-global-leader-in-blockchain-technology/article34259697/>

In 'Accessibility 2024', the provincial government's goal for BC is to have the highest labour participation rate for people with disabilities in Canada by 2024; a laudable and supportable goal; however, there is a sub-set of individuals who receive disability supports that are not well represented in the government literature. These individuals are recovering from a long-term illness and are preparing to re-enter the labour market. To ensure their successful re-integration, they require flexibility in the Disability Assistance Program to help both the employer and employee accommodate the transition from a few hours a week to full-time employment.

Background

Although this likely affects a small number of employers (numbers not publicly available due to privacy concerns), workers in this sub-group are not covered by insurance or their insurance had time-limits and they are not Workers Compensation Board (WCB) or Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC) related and there is no union agreement in place. The challenge requiring time away from employment is usually a major illness or injury of some kind that, at some point, can either go into remission, or the individual is "getting better," or is in some form able to return to work.

Under ideal circumstances, a worker is covered by their employment insurance benefits, and the accommodations required are agreeable to all parties.³⁹ Unfortunately, not all employees on long-term leave are covered if their employers were not able to provide an insurance benefit, or the benefit is time-limited. Not all employers are able to accommodate if the accommodation requires "undue hardship."⁴⁰

Limited by lack of assistance, these individuals end up on disability assistance which provides them and any family members a set income per month, plus the ability to earn up to various amounts (determined by their family income, as it applies) per year, before a dollar for dollar deduction or "clawback" is triggered. The exemption limits are:

- \$15,000 for a single person with the Persons with Disabilities designation
- \$18,000 for a family with two adults where only one person has the Persons with Disabilities designation
- \$30,000 for a family where both adults have the Persons with Disabilities designation

Any money earned over those annual earnings exemption limits will be deducted dollar for dollar from the assistance payments; however, to successfully re-integrate into an employment situation, individuals may find the maximum allowable support to be a barrier as they gradually increase their employment hours but are not experiencing the benefit. Further, the increase in employed hours paid may not be sufficient to replace the disability support, hindering the employee's ability to leave the disability assistance program, particularly if that person has dependents.

³⁹<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/planned-accessibility-legislation/consultation-legislation.html>

⁴⁰ Canadian Human Rights Commission, <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/guide-managing-return-work>

The dollar-for-dollar deductions after allowable earnings is a major barrier to a successful return-to-work plan requiring recovering employees to full-time while ensuring sufficient income. If returning too soon, the employee can suffer a medical set back impacting their recovery and the workplace. What is required for these willing workers, is a flexible assistance schedule that allows for increasing hours and commensurate pay, and extra time required to successfully integrate. A temporary transitional interim support of 50% deduction before full dollar to dollar recovery, as part of their plan and with the concurrence of their government case worker, would be of great value to ease and encourage a skilled worker back to full employment.

A safe and timely return to work benefits the patient and their family by enhancing recovery and reducing disability. Through improvement of health outcomes, a safe and timely return to work also preserves a skilled and stable workforce for employers and society and reduces demands on health and social services as well as on disability plans.” — “The Physician's Role in Helping Patients Return to Work After Illness or Injury,” Canadian Medical Association, 201.⁴¹

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. In their Annual Earnings Exemption table, introduce a transitional Disability Assistance graduated recovery of incomes earned over the allowable income exemption for individuals transitioning to full or near-full employment as part of a gradual return-to-work program.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

7. A NEW ECONOMIC LENS FOR BC HEALTH CARE

Issue

Innovation and technological advancements are extremely fast paced, but BC’s healthcare system has the opportunity to catch up. BC and Canada has an aging population. Acute intervention, which accounts for 80% of publicly funded dollars but serves less than 20% of the population, will be more costly in the future⁴². Now is the time for innovative strides in the public health care system by implementing a chronic care management system that includes the physician and nurses, patients and their social and community support systems, and technologically innovative organizations.

Hospitals also remain fundamental to the healthcare system but are not funded to ensure healthcare delivery is equitable.

Background

A healthy population is an efficient and productive population. Cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer are among the main diseases that affect Canadians⁴³. These diseases manifest over time and need to be appropriately managed in an efficient way before they become detrimental to our economic production capacity. A healthier population now also means that down the road – with the current trend of an aging population in Canada – society will observe less costs in the healthcare system.

⁴¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/diversity-equity/disability-management/fundamentals-return-to-work-plan.html>

⁴² <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/seniors-action-report.html#tc2a>

⁴³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/how-healthy-canadians.html>

As it stands, cardiovascular diseases, stroke, diabetes, and cancer are managed by acute intervention (via surgery). Acute intervention accounts for 80% of the money invested by the public and helps 20% of the population, many times when it is too late. This area of intervention is handled solely by doctors, and there is we are seeing a declining trend in e in the total number of patients that general practitioners in BC see day-to-day⁴⁴. At this point, doctors are stressed, overworked, and in need of assistance.

India has an enterprise known as Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd that delivers a single point of access that provides the care for and management of chronic diseases. It includes a pharmacy, physicians, dental physicians, physiotherapy, and telemedicine⁴⁵. This innovative hospital also provides patients with access to healthcare in the form of including community and social networks, which can be your priest, your family, and your friends. By including all of these aspects in one area, patients can consult with many experts and it will alleviate the pressures on the primary care provider, the Family Physician.

Working with medical professionals, Apollo has endeavoured to advocate for a system that would alleviate the pressure on the current healthcare model. In addition to the GP and nurses within the current acute intervention model (i.e. hospitals), they have many healthcare providers working in tangent to ensure that patients have well-rounded support systems. Apollo envisions a reform where care is delivered in a continuum. The patient is empowered to involve their social network with other professionals in the healthcare industry.

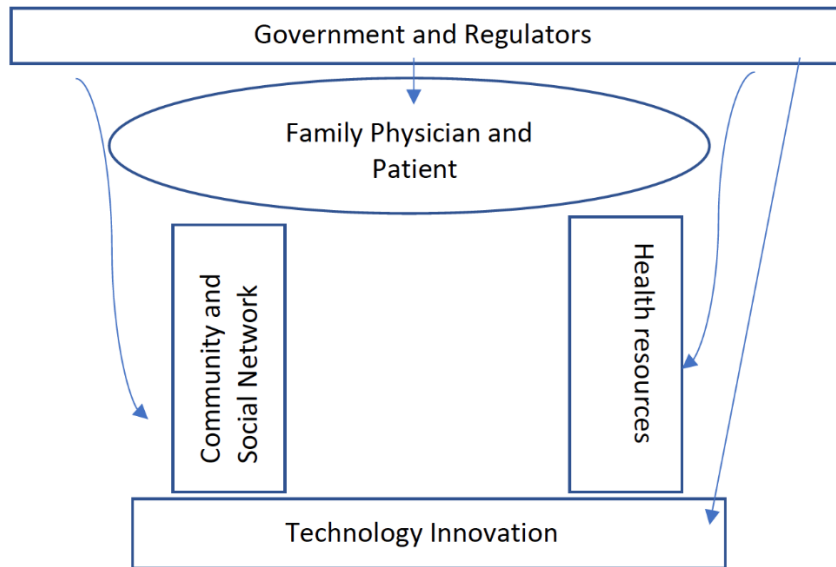
In this innovative approach, the GP and patient would be central to the chronic care management/primary care system. The government would work with regulators to provide funding, research, and incentives; they would also ensure accountability. A pillar supporting the GP and patient would be the resources – this would include many NGOs, other care deliverers, and the local healthcare regulators (i.e. Fraser Health). The other pillar of support would be the community and social network of the patient.

Finally, there would be the technology industry providing innovative approaches to care delivery. The system is illustrated by figure 1 below. The arrows indicate that government and regulatory bodies provide funding and incentives to the various actors within the system. At the same time, feedback and monitoring must be persistent in the entire system and so the program can adapt to changing circumstances. The system and its actors would work collaboratively and congruently to ensure that optimal care is delivered to the patient.

Figure 1 The Hierarchy of Health

⁴⁴ <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/number-of-b-c-doctors-growing-but-work-life-balance-means-fewer-patient-visits-worsening-access>

⁴⁵ https://www.who.int/goe/publications/goe_telemedicine_2010.pdf



Actions We Can Take Now And Why Health Care Matters To Business:

The failure of our system to adapt to the changing needs of British Columbian's has left a very expensive health-care system that delivers mediocre results, as stated by the physicians and healthcare professionals we worked with in developing this policy. COVID-19 has made it evident that healthy communities lead to economic prosperity, and that unhealthy or unwillingness for individuals to adequately take care of themselves creates economic uncertainty. British Columbians should have a health-care system that is truly worthy of their confidence and trust. There are four clear steps that could be taken to achieve this:

Integration and Innovation

Health-care stakeholders in BC still function in silos. Hospitals, primary care, social care, home care and long-term care all function as entities unto themselves. There is poor information sharing and a general failure to serve common patients in a coordinated way. Ensuring that the patient is at the centre — regardless of where or by whom they are being served — will lead to better, safer, more effective and less expensive care. Investments in information systems will be key to the success of these efforts. If investments in technology and information systems are made this will benefit workers to ensure they have the integrated health care knowledge that they need in an expedient pathway - taking limited time away from the workplace.

Enhanced Accountability

Those who provide healthcare to British Columbians, there needs to be greater accountability and models focused on outcomes rather than outputs. Quality and effectiveness should be rewarded rather than the amount of service provided. Alignment of professional, patient and system goals would ensure that everyone is pulling their oars in the same direction. Improving accountability would provide better peace of mind for people to return to work and provide business owners peace of mind that their employees are being given outcome orientated treatments.

Broaden the Definition of Comprehensiveness

Many factors influence the health of British Columbians in addition to doctors' care and hospitals. So why does our "universal" health-care system limit its coverage to doctors' and hospital services? A plan that seeks health equity would distribute its public investment across a broader range of services. A push for universal Pharmacare, for example, is currently under way in Canada. Better integration of health and social services would also serve to address more effectively the social determinants of health.

Bold leadership

Bold leadership from both government and the health sectors are essential to bridge the gaps and break down the barriers that have entrenched the status quo. British Columbians need to accept that seeking improvements and change does not mean sacrificing the noble ideals on which our system was founded. On the contrary, we must change to honour and maintain those ideals. Our leaders should not be afraid to set aspirational goals.⁴⁶

Hospital Investments

The World Health Organization indicates that the minimum hospital beds a geographical area should have is 1 bed per 1000 citizens. Below is a comparison of hospital beds versus population (2021 census data).

There are many hospitals throughout the lower mainland that service the entire Metro Vancouver region.

- SMH 634 beds vs population 568,320
- Abbotsford – 300 beds vs population 153,524
- Royal Columbian Hospital (New Westminster) - 490 beds vs population 78,916
- Langley Memorial - 188 beds vs population 166,356 (City and Township)
- Peace Arch (White Rock) - 146 beds vs population 21,939
- Burnaby Hospital - 314 vs population 249,125
- Vancouver General Hospital and Health Sciences Centre - 1300 acute; 6,700 residential; 80 rehabilitation; 900 assisted living/respite beds
- St. Paul's Hospital, Mount Saint Joseph Hospital - 2,000 acute; 6,700 residential; 270 rehabilitation; 900 assisted living/respite beds

The Fraser Health Authority denotes Surrey Memorial Hospital as a regional hospital⁴⁷, however, it does not have the facilities required to treat three of the leading causes of sudden death: heart attack; stroke and trauma. Those patients must be transported to Royal Columbian Hospital (RCH). Unfortunately, if there is a natural disaster that prevents access to RCH, there is no hospital south of the Fraser River that can treat heart attacks, strokes, or certain types of trauma.

⁴⁶ <https://theconversation.com/how-healthy-is-the-canadian-health-care-system-82674>

⁴⁷ <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Locations/Surrey/surrey-memorial-hospital#.Y4UO1uzMJKc>

FHA and therefore Surrey have historically received less per capita than Vancouver for health care. A review of the 2020/21 audited statements of FHA and Vancouver Coastal show that: FHA received \$2,229 per person. Vancouver Coastal received \$3,033.

B C Ambulance statistics for 2021 show that 1376 patients were transferred from SMH to other cities for care. The top three reasons were heart, stroke, and pediatric specialty care.

The new Surrey hospital is projected to have 168 beds bringing Surrey's total beds up to 802. Although this satisfies the WHO's minimum beds per 1000 persons in a geographical area, it still fails to satisfy the needs of the region.

The new hospital will have: 5 operating rooms; 4 procedure rooms; an emergency room with 55 treatment spaces; virtual care options; 3 CT scanners; 2 MRI machines; a pharmacy; a laboratory, and; academic spaces. All these services with an additional cancer research facility are expected in the \$1.72 billion hospital.

As it stands, there is no emergency plan that addresses how residents living south of the Fraser River will access these lifesaving services in the event of an earthquake or natural disaster that affects bridge and tunnel crossings.

The provincial government has made some significant investments in healthcare as it relates to acute care, especially in budget 2023⁴⁸. The federal government has also provided more funding for healthcare⁴⁹. These investments must be made in aspects of healthcare that is being asked for by our medical professionals.

⁴⁸ <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/health-care/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2023/02/the-government-of-canada-and-british-columbia-reach-agreement-in-principle-to-improve-health-services-for-canadians.html>

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial and Federal Governments:

1. Invest in greater hospital capacities in the areas that will see high levels of population growth;
2. Develop an emergency plan that addresses how residents will receive care given a large-scale natural disaster;

Close the gap in chronic care and empower the patient to manage their health by utilizing self-management, behaviour modification, and lifestyle, which includes: Family Physician, nurses, the patient, community and social support systems, and technologically innovative organizations; and,

Work with the Federal government in implementing a universal single-payer Pharmacare system.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

8. GUIDELINES FOR ENFORCING RESIDENTIAL RENTAL TENURE ZONING

Issue

In the next 25 years, BC will be home to several of the fastest growing census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in the country, including Kelowna and Surrey, with over one million new residents moving to Metro Vancouver. More housing choices are required in British Columbia in order to be economically competitive by attracting and keeping skilled workers. Housing choices that meet various income levels and are located within a reasonable distance from employers are most desirable. In 2018, the Provincial Government legislated the Residential Rental Tenure Zoning (RRTZ) tool to protect rental units, increase housing choices, and improve affordability; it fell short due to flawed implementation.

Background

Little guidance and impact research from decisionmakers allowed municipalities to interpret the tool in a way that has devalued property, reduced incentives to create homes, and infringed on property rights without adequate consultation with landowners.

The search for solutions has resulted in new taxes, financial reforms and policy measures that have had various levels of effectiveness.

The new zoning tool is unprecedented in North America and allows municipalities to zone buildings, sites and areas of communities as exclusively rental tenure. The tool is intended to protect rental units, increase housing choices, and improve affordability for British Columbians.

RRTZ has the potential to speed up the development of purpose-built rental homes through pre-zoning. The tool defines the number, portion or percentage of rental units in a new building and ensures that the property will be used for rental housing in the future. The issue at present is a lack of supply, and this tool does not address this problem.

RRTZ has the capability of devaluing properties when rezoning is not combined with density increases. Furthermore, some municipalities have elected to rezone areas without appropriate consultation of the landowners. Property devaluation, a lack of consultation, and a climate of uncertainty will lead to builders to choose other types of projects over rental home construction.

Thoughtful guidelines, proper definitions and policy reforms to Residential Rental Tenure Zoning can ensure this is a tool which will foster more housing options that support growth and lead to the supply of new, affordable rental homes in time to meet the growing need.

The Urban Development Institute supports the development of stakeholder consultation and active monitoring of results to achieve increased rental supply of housing as British Columbia's population continues its rapid expansion.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

3. Develop a guidance document, through consultation with stakeholders, for municipalities which provides clear direction on the intended use of this unprecedented and untested Residential Rental Tenure Zoning measure; and,
4. Annually monitor the results of Residential Rental Tenure Zoning implementation and provide further direction, where needed, to support the objective of increasing the amount of rental homes for British Columbians.

Submitted by the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce

Supported by the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce and the Surrey Board of Trade

9. IMPROVING ECONOMIC AND LABOUR MARKET PERFORMANCE FOR WOMEN AND MINORITIES

Issue

Pay gaps between four designated groups (women, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities) and men remains a consistent problem for the Canadian economy and impacted individuals. One reason attributed to this gap is that fewer individuals in designated groups are employed in high-paying occupations, which are dominated by men⁵⁰. Ensuring that there is training, hiring, and education of the designated groups will lead to a larger number of employable individuals in the workforce, which can reduce the shortage of workers experienced by all industries.

Background

The gender pay gap or gender wage gap is the average difference between the remuneration for men and women who are working. Women are generally considered to be paid less than men. Race wage gap is the average difference between the remuneration for white men and immigrants. This policy examines the difference between white men and immigrants who landed in the previous 10 years. Additionally, this policy will also examine the difference in wage gap between Indigenous men and white men.

Based on the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system, the wage gap between men and women has been shrinking since 1988 (18.8%) compared to 2018 (13.3%)⁵¹. Women earn \$.88 for every dollar a

⁵⁰ Schirle, Tammy, and Moyosoreoluwa Sogaolu, "A Work in Progress: Measuring Wage Gaps for Women and Minorities in the Canadian Labour Market," Commentary No. 561. C.D. Howe Institute.

https://www.cdhowe.org/sites/default/files/attachments/research_papers/mixed/Commentary_561.pdf

⁵¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>

man earns when examining both full and part time employees in 2022, which is a decrease from 2020 and 2021.⁵² Visible minority men were seen to be making 8% less than white men when examining 2015 data.⁵³ White women, working full-time, earned roughly 30% less than white men.⁵⁴ Indigenous women earned 44% less than white men, and Indigenous men earned 18% less than white men.⁵⁵ These trends are consistent throughout Canada and need to be rectified.

Federally regulated firms are already required to engage in proactive employment practices to increase the representation of four designated groups: women, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities under the Employment Equity Act of Canada⁵⁶. These firms include banks, broadcasters, telecommunication companies, railroads, airlines, private businesses necessary to the operation of a federal act, maritime transportation companies, other inter-provincial transportation companies, uranium-related organizations, federal crown corporations, and corporations controlled by two or more provincial governments. This legislation covers approximately 10% of the Canadian workforce⁵⁷.

The Business Case

If there is adequate education and training offered to groups such as Indigenous, immigrants, and women, the economy will perform remarkably better. A better trained workforce will be able to gain employment in higher paying jobs. A higher disposable income will allow for greater spending in local communities, increasing tax and general business revenue.

When more people are able to receive quality training and education, the pool of qualified applicants also increases. Since Canada is facing a shortage of highly skilled, educated, and trained workers, the government needs to take action in ensuring there is equity in higher paying occupations, and improve training and education in fields where women, Indigenous peoples, and minorities are underrepresented.

An expansion of the current Employment Equity Act to include more private sector areas such as the oil and gas industry, technology industry, and other high-paying occupations will improve access for skilled workers to find employment, as has been the case for federally regulated occupations. Additionally, there will be funds available to the newly added private-sector occupations⁵⁸.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government collaborate with the Federal Government to:

5. Improve training and education opportunities in industries in which women, Indigenous, people with disabilities and minorities are underrepresented; and,
6. Create provincial legislation similar to the federal Employment Equity Act to expand the reach beyond only federally regulated industry.

⁵² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410034002>

⁵³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220126/dq220126a-eng.htm>

⁵⁴ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>

⁵⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>

⁵⁶ <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html#h-215166>

⁵⁷ Human Resources and Social Development Canada. "Employment Equity Act Review". Archived from [the original](#) on 17 March 2012.

⁵⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/labour-standards/reports/employment-equity-2018.html#h2.05>

10. CAN THE FUTURE LEARN IN THE SOUTH FRASER REGION? THE NEED FOR MORE INVESTMENTS IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Issue

B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook for 2021 to 2031 estimates that nearly 80% of the expected employment openings will require a university degree or some post-secondary education (including trades)⁵⁹; however, in 2021, only 42.3% of BC's workforce had any post-secondary certification⁶⁰, compared to 71% in the rest of Metro Vancouver in 2011. Further education for a greater proportion of recent high school graduates and for the current workforce is of paramount importance for BC and for BC's economic and social development.

The provincial government has begun to make the necessary additional investment to Surrey's and the South Fraser economic region's K-12 educational system. To realize the return on that investment (ROI), a similar phased-in capital expenditure plan focused on the South Fraser region's post-secondary institutions is essential.

All aspects of post-secondary education in BC must be expanded; three areas deserve special comment: literacy and English language programs; trades training programs; and, research and professional programs. Although these three areas are specific to Surrey and its region, all regions throughout the province can hope to benefit from enhancements.

Background

The 983,000 people in Surrey and the South Fraser region – the largest and fastest-growing region of British Columbia – produce over 19% of British Columbia's high school graduates; however, students have much less access to post-secondary institutions than other students in the rest of British Columbia. Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Simon Fraser University-Surrey together offer only 12.7 post-secondary spaces for every hundred 18-24-year old's in the region. The rest of B.C. receives almost four times that level of access, with 48.7 spaces for every hundreds of these young adults.

All aspects of post-secondary education in Surrey and its region must be expanded; three areas deserve special comment:

B.C. is expected to have 1,004,000 job openings between 2021 and 2031. Nearly 80% of job seekers will need some form of post-secondary education or training.

Literacy and English Language Programs

An essential part of B.C.'s post-secondary system is its adult basic education and English Language programs. These programs give students the skills to succeed in further education, and to be capable entry-level employees.

Trades Programs

⁵⁹ <https://www.workbc.ca/labour-market-industry/labour-market-outlook.aspx>

⁶⁰ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=British%20Columbia&DGUIDlist=2021A000259&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

Trades training is essential for the economic vitality of our region: According to the BC Labour Market Outlook, 2021-2031, approximately 8% of all job openings will be in the trades. The demand for trades employees has outpaced the supply; however, while the region has 20% of BC's population, only 4.4% of B.C.'s trades training is offered there.

Research and Professional Programs

Post-secondary education includes studies in areas of high importance for BC's industries and sectors – for example, in clean energy engineering and in health sciences, both priority areas for the province; however, research in the region's universities is severely limited by lack of available program funding and facilities. The provincial government promised increasing student seats in SFU from 2,500 to 5,000 by 2015, but that has not happened.

The province has announced that they will fully support and aid the creation of a new medical school at SFU. This is a major win for all residents and businesses in the province.

Benefits for Business

Post-Secondary education is crucial to economic development. Educated people can more easily adapt to the changing nature of work and can better apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Research undertaken as part of advanced and graduate-level programs often leads to innovative start-up companies and to knowledge and technology transfer by which existing businesses can expand.

It is imperative that the level of access to post-secondary education in Surrey and the South Fraser region be brought up to the level provided to the rest of B.C. Such an increase is crucial for the regional and provincial development.

To achieve this, the number of full-time equivalent student spaces (FTEs) per resident in this region must be increased from the current level of 18.8 FTEs per 1,000 residents to 37.8 FTEs per 1,000 region residents (this accessibility ratio of 37.8 FTEs per 1,000 region residents is still 17% lower than the level of post-secondary access provided to the rest of the province: 45.7 FTEs per 1,000 residents).

Since the region's population will also increase over this time period, this means that the actual number of post-secondary student spaces offered in our region must be increased to 46,060 FTEs by 2025 – an increase of about 3,000 FTEs per year.

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Without this action, B.C.'s most populous and fastest growing region may not be capable of harnessing its potential to become a social and economic powerhouse. The scarcity of skilled labour and research facilities in the local market will continue to significantly hinder the growth of Surrey's core business community. The region's need for capital expenditures targeting socio-economic problems will increase. The challenge for local businesses seeking to attract and retain skilled individuals – especially those seeking opportunities for advancement – will increase.

With this action, Surrey and the South Fraser region – and the province – will reap the many social and economic benefits mentioned above. In the short term, local businesses will benefit directly from the increased spending in the region from the universities’ operating expenditures, by employees of the universities, and from the spending on capital expenditures needed for the expansion of campuses.

More importantly, in the medium-to-long-term, businesses will gain from the region’s improved competitive positioning. Lastly, fostering the growth of this region’s businesses and significant increases to tax revenue for the provincial government.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

7. Phase in a tripling of the number of post- secondary student spaces per resident in the South Fraser region from 2024 thru 2029.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

11. MANUFACTURING – A SKILLED WORKFORCE

Issue

In the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) Industry 2030 report, 35% respondents to a Management Issues Survey indicated that attracting or retaining skilled labour was one of their three most pressing challenges⁶¹ and topped the list of possible responses. Further, the CME reported that close to 60% of businesses anticipate skilled labour shortages in 5 years. There are multiple strategies to attract youth to trade programs and to attract skilled immigrants. A third approach may be required to meet the growing skills gap: a flexible, easily accessible incentive program for employers to upgrade the skills of existing employees and potential hires to meet their specific skill requirements.

Background

Employers publicly denounce the lack of available skilled labour, which leaves positions unfilled. Unemployed or underemployed university graduates decry the lack of opportunities in their fields. Industry associations, such as CME, advocate for developing a stronger skilled workforce in Canada as part of their Industry 2030 reports.⁶²

Policy solutions like expanding immigration and loosening temporary foreign worker regulations to assist employer access to skilled labour or introducing the trade careers earlier in the education stream to foster a change of perceptions regarding employment prospects are often proposed. One concept

⁶¹ Industrie 2030, Manufacturing Growth, Innovation and Prosperity for Canada, CME, CMC. 2016. P.15. www.industrie2030.ca

⁶² Industrie 2030, Manufacturing Growth, Innovation and Prosperity for Canada. CME, CMC. 2016. P.20. <http://www.industrie2030.ca/>

that has yet to be brought forward in any substantive form is the use of tax credits to provide incentives for personal or in-house training.

Despite a variety of programs, grants and tax incentives there is no over-arching, flexible opportunity to encourage employers and employees to work together to fill any skills gap. There is currently no updated data on how much employers spend on training for new and existing staff that reflects the current climate, which should be addressed with a Canada-wide labour market report.

There are a number of programs that provide some incentives through grants and other tax credits; however, they are limited in various ways to specific demographics and defined circumstances. The Canada – BC Employer Training Grant provides up to \$10,000 to employers per employee⁶³. There are tax credits available through WorkBC for very specific industries and activities⁶⁴ and a federal wage subsidy program for youth only, which has expired.⁶⁵ For older workers there is an employment assistance program for re-training – but only if the worker is unemployed, in a community experiencing high unemployment or economic downturn and has also expired.⁶⁶ The best program by far is the Training Tax Credit for apprenticeships through the Industry Training Authority.⁶⁷

The targeted nature of grants and credits are very helpful to employers to onboard minorities and the sometimes hard to employ; however, if an employer requires a very specialized skill set and has an employee who, with training, could fill the gap, there is little to support either party, particularly for small to medium sized entities.

Employees, whether full or part-time, in their chosen career or underemployed based on their degree attainment bear some responsibility for their own training, but many are caught with student debt and minimum wage positions. Workers cannot gain experience because employers are reluctant to take on those who may require additional skills mentoring. Full time workers with families are unable to shoulder the high cost of tuition that is required for them to keep up with the changing nature of their employment. This is particularly true for positions that are becoming more vulnerable with the rapid advances in technology.⁶⁸ Further, employees and/or students are eligible for a small tax deduction for tuition fees,⁶⁹ but effective January 1, 2017, related education and textbooks deductions were

⁶³ <https://www.workbc.ca/find-loans-and-grants/industry-and-employers/bc-employer-training-grant>

⁶⁴ Training Tax Credit <https://www.workbc.ca/Employer-Resources/Funding-and-Programs/Incentives-and-Tax-Credits.aspx>

⁶⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/youth-employment-skills-strategy-program.html>

⁶⁶ Funding for Employment Assistance for Older Workers <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/training-agreements/older-workers.html>

⁶⁷ <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/income-taxes/corporate/credits/training/employer>

⁶⁸ Hennessy, Angela. “As well or better than humans”: Automation set for big promotions in white-collar job market. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/automation-jobs-canada-computers-white-collar-1.3982466>. February 28, 2017.

⁶⁹ Eligible tuition fees: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng/ddctns/lns300-350/323/lgbl-eng.html>

eliminated.⁷⁰ Additionally, the federal government has waived interest on Canada Student Loans until March 2023 but it also announced plans to scrap student loan interest for all new and existing federal student and apprentice loans. If this change is approved, the forgiveness of student loan interest would come into effect on April 1, 2023.⁷¹

Employers no longer have the luxury of hiring a made-to-order employee as the nature of the labour force has changed and, employees no longer have job security as the nature of their work is rapidly changing due to advances in technology.⁷² An over-arching strategy of incentives for skills-upgrading on the job would encourage employers and employees to fill their own gaps with their own resources, particularly when employees have the opportunity to tailor their skill sets to the need at hand.^{73,74}

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial and Federal Governments:

1. Develop an easily accessible and understood portal to the tax credits and grants currently available for individually funded and employer-sponsored education expenditures;
2. Expand tax credits and grants and be more flexible in assisting businesses in filling diverse and specific skills gaps as they emerge especially for youth and elderly individuals; and,
3. Work with the federal government to commission a study through a chamber of commerce or board of trade to understand how much money employers are spending on employee training and upskilling.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

12. ENABLING BC'S CANNABIS ECONOMY

Issue

The legal recreational cannabis market opened many aspects of the supply chain to the private sector to fill the need for the responsible production and sale of cannabis products in Canada.

It is estimated that 2022 sales of cannabis is expected to reach or exceed \$4.5 billion.⁷⁵ Early market projections for the recreational cannabis market continue to fall short due to:

⁷⁰ Effective January 1, 2017, the federal education (a \$ amount x #of months) and textbook tax credits will be eliminated. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng/ddctns/lns300-350/323/menu-eng.html>

⁷¹ <https://www.narcity.com/federal-government-changes-student-loans>

⁷² Hennessy, Angela. "As well or better than humans": Automation set for big promotions in white-collar job market. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/automation-jobs-canada-computers-white-collar-1.3982466>. February 28, 2017.

⁷³ Cappelli, Peter. Skill Gaps, Skill Shortages and Skill Mismatches: Evidence for the US. The National Bureau of Economic Research. August 2014. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20382>

⁷⁴ Burleton, Derek et al. Jobs in Canada: Where, What and For Whom? Executive Summary. TD Economics. October 2013.

⁷⁵ <https://www.cannabisbenchmarks.com/canada-reports/canada-cannabis-spot-index-january-20-2023/>

- Jurisdictional issues between the provincial and municipal governments
- A complex supply chain
- The cost of legal cannabis relative to the illicit market
- Packaging restrictions

Although not a primary consideration for the government, in order to achieve its stated policy objectives, the private sector must be able to operate in the recreational cannabis market in a sustainable manner.

Background

Increased Enforcement

The two biggest challenges to the development of the nascent regulated cannabis industry are entrenched illicit market competition and inefficient and costly regulation. The continued operation of illegal cannabis retailers, dispensaries and dealers today is a failure of a key goal of legalization: eliminating the illicit market. As they do not operate within the legal and regulatory framework, they are able to forgo many of the associated costs which legal companies must incur – both regulatory charges and fees, and mark-up paid on wholesale orders from the Liquor Distribution Branch. They also do not pay taxes as business entities, nor do they collect sales or other taxes which contribute to government revenue. As a result of these forgone costs, these illegal operations are able to undercut legal cannabis businesses on price, siphoning customers away and putting the legal industry at risk.

The illicit market in British Columbia is active in three interconnected areas: unregulated production, unlicensed retail stores, and illicit e-commerce sales. There is limited enforcement against illicit operators. The independent expert panel established by the Government of Canada⁷⁶ in 2022 will take an extended period to research and report current issues. The report will clarify provincial expenditures around compliance and enforcement against future expected transfers from the Federal Government to BC from the province's share of the excise duty.

Financial Services

Despite cannabis businesses and products being legalized for years now, many private operators have reported being excluded from key financial services and products because of their chosen industry. These businesses can experience refusal of service by financial institutions where they are unable to open bank accounts or access key services such as credit cards or investment vehicles. If this industry is legal, the financial services sector should be required to service and support it like any other legal industry. Provincial and federal governments and regulators should work with the financial sector to identify and overcome challenges with serving this industry to allow these businesses fair access to financial services.

Zoning

Several BC municipalities have made it nearly impossible for legal cannabis businesses to establish in their communities. Some local governments have simply refused to entertain legal cannabis applications and have not established zoning policies or bylaws to allow these businesses. Some other governments allow cannabis businesses, but their zoning is so restrictive as to only allow government-run BC Cannabis Stores to operate, or they create such strict location restrictions that they de facto prohibit these operations.

⁷⁶ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/laws-regulations/cannabis-act-legislative-review/expert-panel.html>

To ensure these legal businesses can operate in communities across BC, the provincial government should create province-wide allowable zoning rules for cannabis retail which should be implemented in those communities which have failed to enact their own policies. In those communities with cannabis zoning policies, the provincial government should instead require that these policies permit private cannabis retail subject to *reasonable* guidelines and requirements.

In all cases, rules applying to legal cannabis distribution must include First Nations and Indigenous participation.

Excise Tax Changes

Cannabis producers are required to remit significant excise taxes to the CRA as part of the legal cannabis regime. Currently, the excise tax is \$1 per gram of dried cannabis flower. During the lead up to legalization, a common projection was that cannabis would retail for \$10/gram, and the \$1/gram tax was communicated in this context. However, the post-legalization market realities are quite different. As of February 8, 2023, the Canada Cannabis Spot Price Index pegged the market price at \$5.03/gram, just over half of the commonly projected \$10/gram price. Therefore, the excise tax represents nearly 20% of the market price, instead of the 10% it was originally presented as. This presents a financial challenge for cannabis producers, and further erodes the competitiveness of the legal market vis a vis the illicit market.

The current requirement for a provincial/territorial specific stamp increases the cost and complexity of the manufacturing process (adding cost to the final product that is passed on to consumers), and restricts producers to respond to rapidly changing supply and demand conditions in a nascent industry.

Vaping

The manufacturing, distribution, and sale of inhalable cannabis products is already highly regulated to ensure public safety and keep products out of the hands of youth. Our view is that the tax was implemented as a response to nicotine vaping products that have increased in popularity amongst youth, which has an entirely different manufacturing process and supply chain in Canada. The imposed tax on cannabis vape products is counter to the policy objective by encouraging sales from the illicit market by making legal products significantly more expensive in B.C.

Taken together, these policies, bylaws and regulations greatly increase the costs of operating a regulated cannabis business in BC. The corporate infrastructure required to support a chain of legal cannabis retail stores will likely exceed the profits that will be generated. The findings of the Cannabis Act legislative review are expected to address this issue with stakeholder input recommendations creating a more robust bottom line for legal operators

The issues noted above present an important observation – some regulatory decisions potentially run counter to the overall objectives of eliminating the illicit market and keeping cannabis out of the hands of youth. While the legal market continues to establish itself, a high percentage of Canadian consumers purchase unregulated cannabis products. Furthermore, the patchwork of regulation across all provinces and municipalities, along with the increased cost (due to taxation framework, licensing delays, and supply chain considerations) further erode the policy objectives. Aligning the interests of the private sector along with the policy objectives and public safety is critical to the long-term success of the initiative to legalize recreational cannabis in Canada..

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

8. Enable better access to legal cannabis, which in turn will help to extinguish the current illicit market through, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Focus resources and attention for policing and prosecution of illicit and illegal cannabis production and sales, including dispensaries operating outside of the established legal regime;
 - b. Province-wide retail operator licensing, allowing companies to be screened once, with subsequent applications focused on location specific criteria;
 - c. Create province-wide allowable zoning for cannabis retail for municipalities which lack their own policies, and ensure existing municipal cannabis zoning policies permit private cannabis retail locations under reasonable guidelines and requirements;
 - d. Increase the cap on the number of allowed retail locations per operator to help meet consumer demand for legal cannabis and eliminate regional supply gaps.
9. Reduce regulations that cause operational inefficiencies for licensed retailers and do not meaningfully contribute to high health and safety standards for consumers and producers through, but not limited to, the following:
 - a) Allow for different ordering and delivery days for in-demand product or eliminate additional delivery fees to private retailers.
10. Review tax policy related to cannabis focusing on:
 - a. Exempting medical cannabis from PST;
 - b. Work with the federal government on a single national excise stamp.; and
 - c. Removing the 20% tax on cannabis vape products.
11. Work through the BC Financial Services Authority and provincially regulated credit unions to ensure legal cannabis operators can access and receive business banking products and services like any other legal business, and that they are not unduly excluded or restricted from service

That the Federal Government:

12. Treat medicinal cannabis equitably as a medicinal product by:
 - a. Exempting GST on medicinal cannabis;
13. Reduce the current \$1 per gram excise tax to better reflect the current market price for cannabis and to help prevent legal product from being undersold through the illicit market;
14. Work with banks and federally regulated credit unions to ensure legal cannabis operators can access and receive business banking products and services like any other legal business, and require that they are not unduly excluded or restricted from service.

Submitted by the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce and the Surrey Board of Trade

13. COUNTERING COSTLY CYBERCRIMES

Issue

The cost of cybercrime perpetrated on businesses is rising. However, there is insufficient data to determine accurately what those costs are. When asked at a recent cybercrime dialogue if the attendants knew where to report a cybercrime, most did not. Canada does have websites where business can report a breach of their data, however, it is not well known. Businesses need to report cybercrime and provide the data that the federal agencies require to accurately measure the costs and develop strong countermeasures. Conversely, the federal agencies could and should do more to engage businesses as part of their planning and outreach strategies and promote their webpage for reporting cybercrime through education and awareness campaigns.

Background

The fact that cybercrime is on the increase is indisputable. What becomes challenging is measuring the impact on Canada's economy. In 2021, just under one-fifth (18%) of Canadian businesses were impacted by cyber security incidents, compared with 21% of Canadian businesses in both 2019 and 2017 that were impacted. This varied significantly by business size, with 16% of small businesses (10 to 49 employees), 25% of medium businesses (50 to 249 employees), and 37% of large businesses (250 or more employees) reporting being impacted by cyber security incidents in 2021.⁷⁷

The most common types of cyber security incidents identified by business in 2021 were incidents to steal money or demand ransom payments (7%) and incidents to steal personal or financial data (6%). More than one-third (39%) of Canadian businesses impacted by cyber security incidents indicated that there was no clear motive.

While most impacted businesses identified external parties (61%) as the perpetrator of cyber security incidents, 38% of impacted businesses could not identify the perpetrator. Other perpetrators identified were internal parties (5%) and known third parties (6%), like a supplier or customer.

The percentage of businesses that reported spending some money to detect or prevent cyber security incidents remained relatively the same in 2021 (61%) compared with 2019 (62%). However, the amount of money Canadian businesses spent to detect or prevent cyber security incidents increased by roughly \$2.8 billion in 2021 to \$9.7 billion when compared with 2019. Large businesses contributed to just under half of the total (\$4.4 billion), followed by small businesses (\$2.9 billion) and medium businesses (\$2.4 billion).

An October 2021 survey of Canadian and worldwide tech and security executives found that 36 percent of Canadian organizations had fully implemented a combined strategy for data management, cyber, privacy, and other governance functions, while 32 percent of worldwide organizations had these practices. In the attempt for better data protection, 42 percent of Canadian organizations had implemented the ability to share data securely with third parties, business partners, and suppliers and to potentially "audit" their compliance to terms.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221018/dq221018b-eng.htm>

⁷⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1341277/data-trust-practices-in-organizations-canada-worldwide/>

The same survey of Canadian tech and security executives found that 23 percent of organizations anticipate a significant year-over-year increase in ransomware attacks in 2022. Furthermore, malware attacks were projected to grow by 43 percent in 2022 compared to 2021.⁷⁹

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government and Federal Government work collaboratively with stakeholders and business to:

4. Increase integration amongst governments and policing agencies and cyber crime prevention professionals to effectively catch and prosecute cyber criminals
5. Promote digital literacy for businesses by establishing best practices for cyber resilience, including education on more sophisticated and specialized crime
6. Invest additional financial and skilled human resources to a national cyber-security centre set up by government, industry and policing agencies to help investigate and warn the public about new and emerging cyber-threats

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

14. KEEP BC BUSINESS MOVING

Issue

BC is Canada's Pacific Gateway, the gateway for vital trade to and from Asia. Effective transportation networks are a fundamental and necessary underpinning of this trade and economic activity. And an integral part of BC's trade & transportation infrastructure is the Highway 1 corridor.

Following the floods of 2021, the province and country saw the vital role this corridor plays in internal and external trade and transportation. While progress has been made in improving some parts of this corridor, further prioritization of enhancing Highway 1 capacity into and out of the Fraser Valley is needed.

Background

The Corridor's Importance

The Highway 1 corridor is of provincial and national importance, providing direct, indirect and induced benefits, including the facilitation of billions of provincial and national GDP activity, the underpinning hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country, and the contribution towards billions in tax revenue. Many of the goods moving along Highway 1 are bound for the Port of Vancouver, which helps facilitate trade through Canada's west coast. Approximately \$1 in every \$3 of Canada's trade in commodities and goods beyond North America move through the Port of Vancouver, making it a critical component of Canada's economy. In 2021, overall cargo through the port reached 146 million tonnes valued at over \$240 billion.

From semi-trucks and trailers hauling freight, to logging and industrial trucks serving the resource industries, to smaller trucks serving local businesses, the trucking industry relies on an efficient Highway 1 corridor as well. Trucking is a significant economic sector and driver in BC. Each year, more than \$3 billion of goods are trucked between the gateway ports and rest of Canada, and the industry itself

⁷⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1341354/estimated-yoy-changes-reportable-cyber-incidents-canada-by-type/>

accounts for 2 percent of BC's GDP, employs about 40,000 people, and is larger than other major industries, including forestry, pulp and paper, and oil and gas.

Beyond direct trucking and industrial use, 80,000⁸⁰ other vehicles use the corridor daily to commute to and from employment, or to conduct other personal and commercial business. These are the employees who power our business sector, the tourists who support the visitor economy in the Fraser Valley and into the BC Interior, and the service providers and tradespeople who deliver our goods, build our houses, and fix our infrastructure.

Trade, trucking, tourism and regional employment all depend on the Highway 1 corridor, and the corridor's importance was vividly illustrated during the aftermath of the record floods of 2021. Following flooding of the Highway 1 corridor, swaths of the highway were closed in Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Hope, severely limiting transportation into and out of the region, to and from the ports, and from the coast into the interior and beyond.

This acute loss of usage of Highway 1 illustrates its importance, and yet we have allowed the Highway 1 corridor to suffer functional loss of usage regularly due to traffic, congestion, lack of capacity, and aging supporting infrastructure like overpasses and interchanges.

The Challenge

Our ability to effectively trade goods and services hinges on robust transportation infrastructure. The portion of the Trans-Canada Highway 1 extending across Greater Vancouver and through the Fraser Valley to Hope is a critical artery of Canada's Pacific Gateway. In recent years, population and trade growth, a regional industrial land shortage and the marked growth of the Abbotsford Airport have overburdened Highway 1, resulting in heavy congestion, safety implications, and challenging our ability to effectively move goods and services into and out of the region.

Today, congestion grinds the corridor to a halt regularly, with average travel speeds dropping to 20 km/h during regular travel peaks,⁸¹ and some commutes taking upwards of 1.5 to 2 hours to travel between Abbotsford and Vancouver. This lack of capacity not only makes it difficult for employees to plan commute times with certainty, it has rendered near impossible travel between the Fraser Valley and Vancouver or other western parts of the region during much of the day. This leads to employees regularly being late to work or job sites, and worse, causes many employees to opt out of job opportunities that would require travelling the corridor, further exacerbating the labour shortage challenges faced by many businesses.

Without capacity increases, this problem will only get worse over time. While today, truck traffic accounts for approximately 16 percent of daily volumes along the corridor, or approximately 12,500 trucks per day, by 2035 it is anticipated that truck demand will increase by 24 to 33 percent. Couple this with the expected 61% increase in the Fraser Valley population in by 2051, and it is clear this corridor's current capacity will not meet the needs of BC residents or businesses.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, "Fraser Valley Highway 1 Corridor Improvement Program - Public Engagement Discussion Guide." Accessed online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/transportation-infrastructure-projects/highway-1-fraser-valley/fraser-valley-discussion-guide.pdf>

⁸¹ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, "Fraser Valley Highway 1 Corridor Improvement Program." Access online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation-projects/fraser-valley-highway1/highway1-whatcom#PublicConsultation>

The Solution

The provincial government is currently advancing a Highway 1 Expansion Project, but in incremental stages which does not constitute a regional solution.

The Highway was widened from 202 Street through 216th street in 2020, and the next phase is currently underway with a widening of the highway from 216th street to 264th street. This project is not expected to be complete until late 2025.

A third phase of expansion beyond Langley and into Abbotsford is still in the planning and consideration phase, and therefore many years off with no timeline publicly committed to. Currently, no plans exist publicly to expand the corridor's capacity beyond Whatcom Road further into Abbotsford or beyond to Chilliwack.

As a priority, the provincial government should commit to expediting the remainder of the Highway 1 expansion to Abbotsford, complete with replacements of aging overpasses such as at 264th street, and then immediately begin developing plans for building additional capacity further into the Fraser Valley, through Chilliwack and to Hope and to the connections with Highways 3 and 5.

This focus and priority would provide much needed capacity for trade and transportation in and out of the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, and would underpin decades of future growth and prosperity. The demands on this corridor will only increase and the costs and delays on our economy will only deepen with time. The time is now to invest and build to keep BC business moving.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Recognize the priority of the Fraser Valley portion of Highway 1 as a major economic corridor and expedite the final stage of the current Highway 1 Expansion Project with widening and expanded/replaced infrastructure from 264th street to Whatcom Road
2. Immediately begin planning and prioritizing further expansions to the Highway 1 corridor from Whatcom Road through Abbotsford and into to Chilliwack, Hope and the connections with Highways 3 and 5.

Submitted by: Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce

Supported by: Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, Surrey Board of Trade

15. EXPEDITING THE GEORGE MASSEY CROSSING PROJECT

Issue

British Columbia is Canada's Asia Pacific Gateway, and our economic competitiveness relies heavily on the well-maintained capacity within our port, air, rail, and roadway infrastructure. Thus, it is imperative that the Province ensures the efficient flow of people and goods throughout the region to increase our regional prosperity and quality of life. The George Massey Tunnel crossing of the Fraser River is a crucial

artery of our transportation network that urgently requires replacing in a timely fashion.

BC's competitive position as a trade and transportation-based economy must be actively protected, and continuously improved upon. While efforts to replace the George Massey crossing are underway, it is important that it is delivered expeditiously and that the principles of value for money, total capital cost, technical viability, difficulty, safety, and time to implement should be key considerations for the replacement project, in addition to environmental sustainability.

Background

With the addition of one million people to B.C.'s population over the next ten years,⁸² and continued growth in trade, more people will be travelling and goods moving through the region. Therefore, it is important that major infrastructure projects provide the capacity to meet future demands.

George Massey infrastructure is a critical link in the Highway 99 trade corridor, connecting our region to the U.S. Interstate 5 Highway in South Surrey, the BC Ferries Terminal in Tsawwassen Deltaport container terminal, and Vancouver International Airport in Richmond. In addition to significant goods movement, up to 92,000⁸³ vehicles commute daily via this corridor, and this demand will continue to rise as the population South of the Fraser continues to increase.

The replacement of the current George Massey Tunnel (GMT) has been one of the region's top regional infrastructure priorities for many years. Located at the nexus of international trade for British Columbia, businesses, and firms from across the province that support, operate, and rely on Canada's Pacific Gateway view the replacement of the current tunnel as a top priority, with a desired focus on the timeliest replacement possible.

Any delays in upgrading this key link will only exacerbate the region's existing problems with congestion, travel time, access to labour resources in adjacent municipalities, and regional emergency response capabilities, in addition to impact on the movement of goods from around the province to national and international markets. Delays and the costs associated with the inefficiencies of congestion are forcing businesses to look at all options to relocate, which is resulting in businesses leaving the province in search for places that are cheaper and easier to operate in.⁸⁴ Thus, the replacement of the current tunnel is both critical to the continued economic competitiveness of the region as well as to that of businesses from other regions of the province in their ability to compete nationally and internationally.

Current Context

Vancouver International Airport (YVR) is the second largest airport in Canada and therefore sees a high volume of both exports and imports. Goods exported via YVR generated \$3.1 billion in direct output and \$2 billion of indirect and induced output in BC, plus \$1.8 billion of total output in other parts of Canada in 2018. Some key exports in 2021 include Electrical machinery/equipment (\$530 million) and cinematic equipment (\$550.6 million). Key imports in 2021 include machinery and mechanical appliances (\$1.47 billion) and electrical machinery (\$1.547 billion).

Current air cargo movements rely on a transportation or trade corridor that permits efficient and

⁸² <https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/full-text-2020-b-c-speech-from-the-throne-1.4807612> Accessed: February 12, 2020

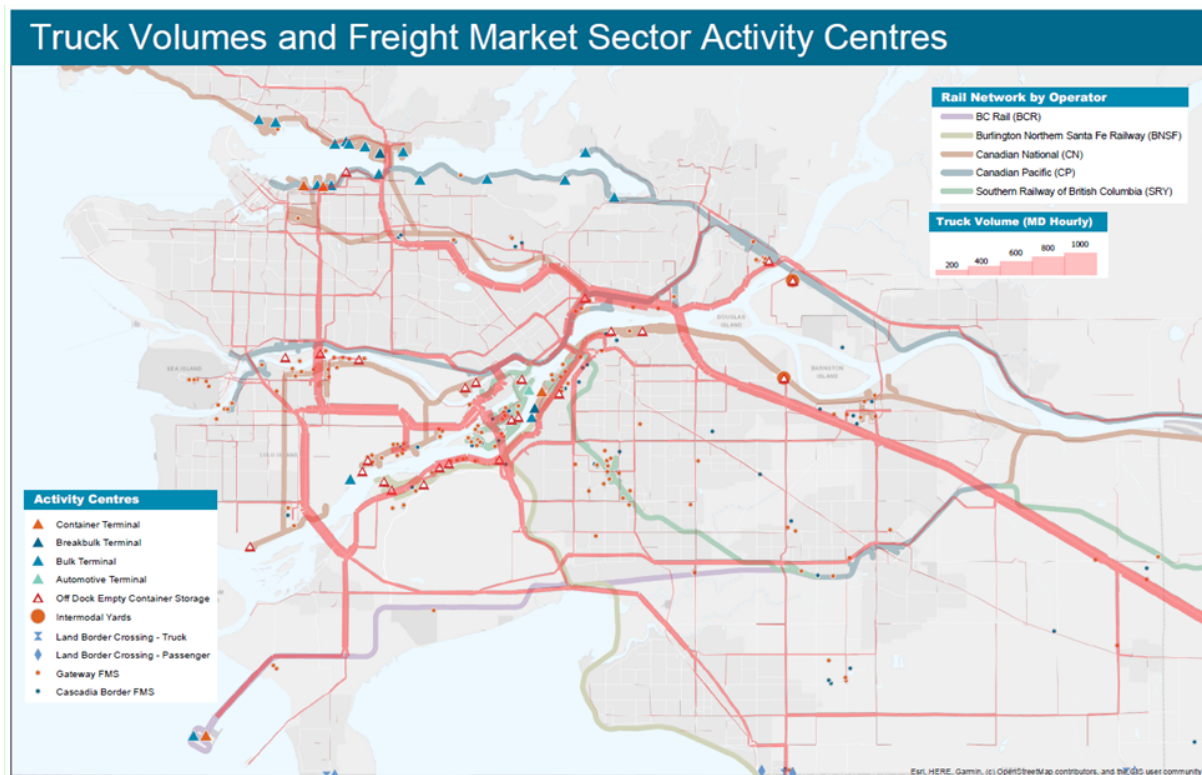
⁸³ https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/52/2020/02/EXEC-SUMMARY-GMC-rpt-01-gen-cowi_Final_report_Rev0E_19-Dec-2019-w-cover-1.pdf

⁸⁴ <https://globalnews.ca/video/4779728/london-drugs-considers-moving-headquarters-out-of-richmond>

reliable access to various businesses and activity centres located in the region, province, and the US. Provincially owned Bridgeport Road and Sea Island Way, located in the City of Richmond, provide the primary corridor for people and goods connecting between Vancouver International Airport (YVR) and the provincial highway system at Highway 99. Highway 99 in turn provides a direct route to the US border (via the Pacific Border Crossing) and connections to other major provincial highways in the region including Highway 91 and Highway 17.

The Pacific Highway Border Crossing is one of western Canada's most important land crossings for goods and people movement. The value of trade goods transported by truck totaled over \$19.8 billion in 2022; including over \$8 billion in Canadian exports alone.⁸⁵

After the Trans Canada Highway, Hwy 99 is one of the Lower Mainland's busiest truck corridors, particularly around the George Massey Crossing (Map 1) and it is a critical route for drayage trucks accessing the port to deliver containerized goods for trade (Map 2).

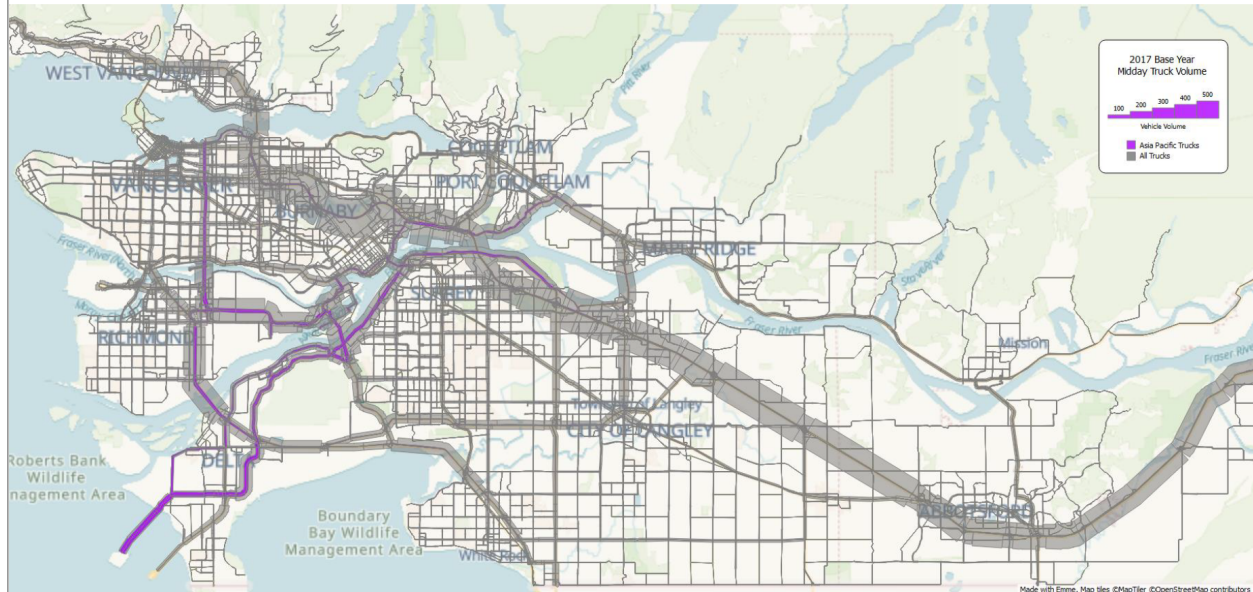


Map 1

⁸⁵https://explore.dot.gov/views/Dashboard_PortbyCommodity/HistoricalTrend?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=1&%3AisGquestRedirectFromVizportal=y

RTM Truck Volume - Asia Pacific Freight Market Sector

2017 Base Year – MIDDAY



Map 2

The Port of Vancouver is about the same size as the next five largest Canadian ports combined. Home to 29 major terminals, the Port can handle the most diversified range of cargo in North America: bulk, containers, breakbulk, liquid bulk, automobiles, and cruise. As the country's gateway to over 170 trading economies around the world, the port handles \$1 of every \$3 of Canada's trade in goods outside of North America. Enabling the trade of approximately \$275 billion in goods, port activities sustain 115,300 jobs, \$7 billion in wages, and \$11.9 billion in GDP across Canada. The Port of Vancouver's Deltaport location, in Delta, is currently Canada's largest container terminal.

George Massey Tunnel location was additionally identified as a significant issue location in the Fraser River Trade Area Study⁸⁶ relating to Canada's Pacific Gateway, due to the ways in which a provincial highway river crossing with significant goods movement related to international trade affects capacity. Efficient and reliable access to the provincial highway network (i.e. Highway 99) is important for international trade making use of airport facilities, because trucks often carry time-sensitive cargo.

In summary, a GMT replacement crossing is a critical project for economic that should be prioritized and built expeditiously; a) in a manner which delivers the most value for taxpayers' money and b) demonstrating cost certainty, expeditious implementation (including the environmental assessment), with the least impact on the river, and affording a lower profile for construction risk.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

⁸⁶ http://www.bctrucking.com/sites/default/files/executive_summary_with_cover_optimized.pdf

15. Expedite the George Massey Tunnel replacement project, with a focus on time to completing; ensuring project work is sufficiently completed to such a stage that federal funding is requested no later than the 2024-2025 fiscal year.
16. Prioritize protection of the scope of the project, e.g., including ensuring appropriate levels of public transit and on/off-ramps for affected residential communities, industrial areas and business parks.
17. Prioritize development of a complete, multi-modal Highway 99 Corridor strategic investment planning strategy document, with short, medium and long-term transportation and infrastructure guidelines that take into consideration current and future conditions, infrastructure repair and replacement needs, land protection and access management, active transportation corridors, high-speed and light-rail opportunities, and additional, expanded public transit access, which includes service to industrial areas and business parks.

Submitted by: Delta Chamber of Commerce & Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and Surrey Board of Trade.

16. REVITALIZING THE FRASER RIVER – UNLOCKING ITS TRUE POTENTIAL

Issue

The Fraser River is one of the most important water systems in British Columbia. It is currently being underutilized due to the lack of development of port cities along the banks of the Fraser River. There are many cities across Canada that have successfully revitalized their waterfront areas along major waterway systems such as Toronto⁸⁷ and around the world⁸⁸. The Board of Trade/Chamber network has an obligation to contribute to regional development and important projects that enhance livability. The revitalization of waterfront areas along the Fraser River will enhance tourism, can provide innovative transportation solutions, and increase housing supply and commercial space.

Background

In the year 1808, Simon Fraser navigated and charted what is now known as the Fraser River in its entirety. In 1827, the first fur trading post was established at Fort Langley. In 1864, dredging of the Fraser River began with the first salmon cannery built in 1864. Fast forward close to 200 years of innovation and advancement, the lower Fraser River port alone contributed to 55,500 jobs, \$3.4 billion in wages, \$5.6 billion in GDP, and \$12 billion in economic output. The Fraser River's water is used by pulp mills, has rich farmland on its banks, and provides an abundance of fisheries. There is, however, limitations to the exploitation of land.

With changing priorities and economic opportunities, well-established practices need to adjust. In the following sections, the benefits that can be harnessed with the revitalization of the Fraser River are explained. These benefits include increased housing supply, innovative commercial spaces, tourism enhancement mechanisms, innovative transportation solutions, and real and perceived economic benefits.

⁸⁷ <https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/our-projects>

⁸⁸ <https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/about-us/who-we-are>

Need for Workforce Housing

We live in an era of precarious affordable housing for our workforce. One of the major goals of the BC and Federal governments are to increase the housing supply. By building smart on previously unutilized areas such as waterfront areas along the Fraser River, this lofty goal can be closer to being accomplished.

There is an abundance of land that can be utilized on waterfront areas along the Fraser River. New Westminster has made great strides in using the waterfront area in an innovative capacity. The City has sold land to BOSA development to build three mixed-use high rises. There are now two towers of 53 and 43 storeys and a three-storey commercial building. In addition to housing space, new development provides amenities such as childcare spaces, commercial use units, and at-grade improvements. These improvements further provide benefits to the community City, and region.

Tourism Enhancements

Exploring the beautiful province of British Columbia is one of the hallmarks of this great province; however, for areas along the Fraser River, and in particular along the Lower Mainland portion, beautiful is a stretch to describe this area of BC. Beautification and investment to revitalize the waterfronts along the Fraser will add another option for tourists to see, explore, and love.

Innovative Transportation Solutions – Quay to Quay ferry in New Westminster

Roads and major highways from East to West are congested in the Lower Mainland. The Lower Mainland and Southwest region will see a population increase of over 1.4% in the next 20 years (figure 1). The province needs to explore innovative transportation options to get people from their home to work in an efficient and effective manner.

Figure 1

BRITISH COLUMBIA POPULATION BY DEVELOPMENT REGION

Development Regions	Population as at July 1st (000s)			Average annual growth 2019- 2041
	2019	2030	2041	
Van Isle/Coast	828	956	1,018	0.8%
Mainland/Southwest	3,093	3,608	4,072	1.4%
Thompson Okanagan	590	653	701	0.9%
Kootenay	160	166	165	0.1%
Cariboo	166	174	174	0.2%
North Coast	59	64	65	0.5%
Nechako	41	48	54	1.4%
Northeast	72	80	84	0.7%
B.C. Total	5,050	5,750	6,334	1.2%

Source: BC Stats

While expanding roadways are a potential solution, it is not a green solution. Ensuring any transportation solution is both environmentally friendly and cost-effective is a priority for residents and government in British Columbia. Transporting employees and tourists to their destination on a ferry that operates on cleaner fuel is a possible solution for improved transportation along the Fraser River. There are also ferries available that are electric hybrids, which align with Government's goals under the CleanBC climate plan to increase the electrification of transportation.

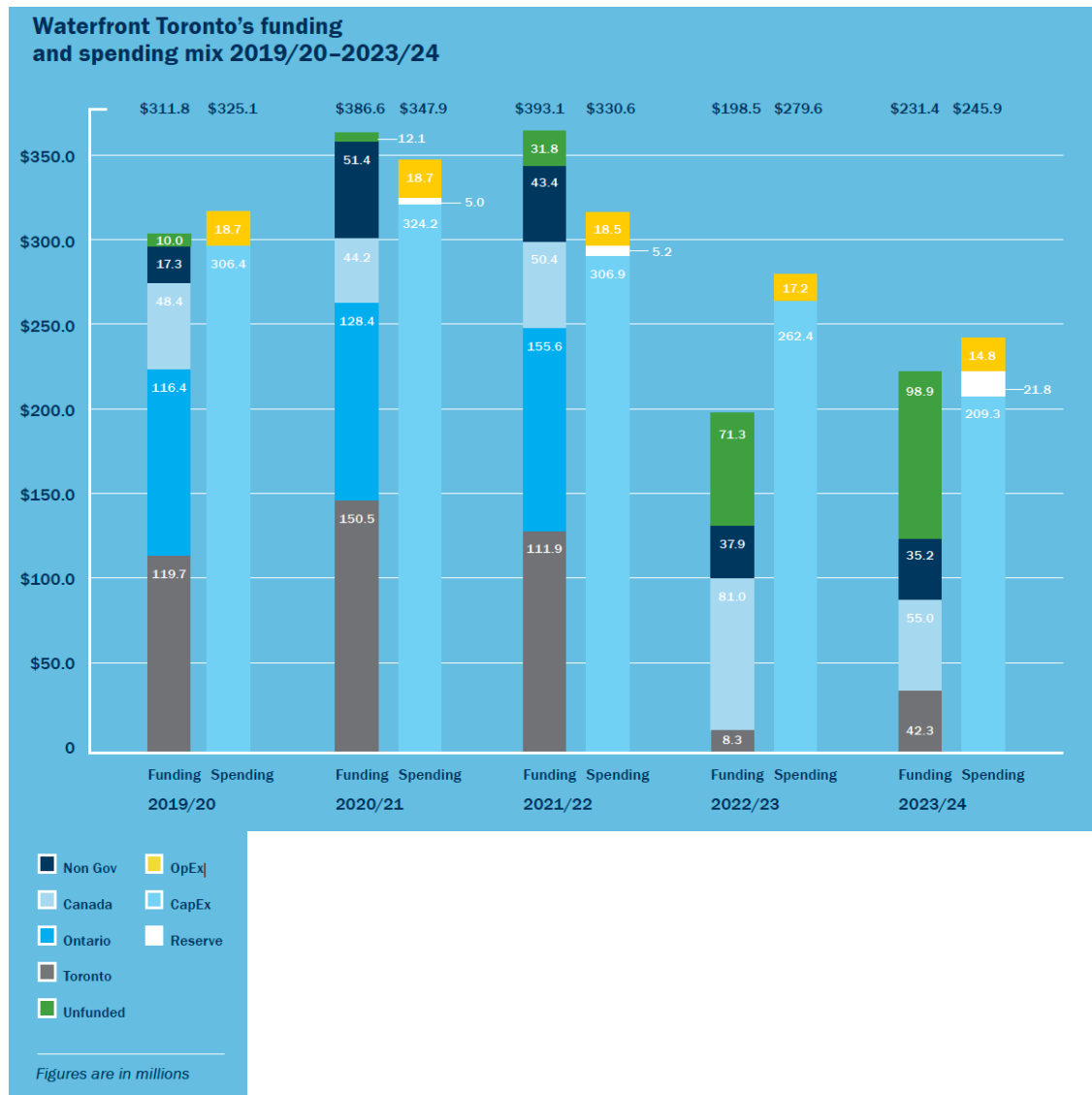
Potential Earning/Economic Development – The Business Case

Waterfront Toronto came together in 2001 with a collaboration across three levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal. Toronto, Ontario, and Canada created an ambitious mandate for Waterfront Toronto to enhance the economic, social, and cultural value of waterfront lands.

From 2001-2017, over 14,000 full time jobs were created during construction. Following completion of construction projects, 5,000 fulltime jobs were created. The project has created 5,500 downtown homes with 600 of these being below-market value homes. Thirteen kilometres of walkable space along the water was realized with five kilometers of cycling connection. There was 25 hectares of parks and public space utilized. Over 1.5 million square feet of commercial development along the waterfront was also realized.

The project had access to \$40 million credit facility throughout the project lifecycle. The three levels of government contributed a total of \$1.25 billion to protect large areas of the city from flooding. With an additional \$246.1 million investment, communities and public spaces can be funded. With a diminishing funding strategy employed, the area can become fully sustainable.

Figure 2



With the Toronto revitalization project, \$3.2 Billion in gross economic output was realized. Nearly \$650 m in revenues in Phase 1 were received. Over \$10 Billion in unlocked development potential for landowners was seen. There was \$1.5 m in tax revenue from the construction projects alone for City of Toronto.

The potential to unlock the cities along the Fraser River is as vast as the river itself. There needs to be a concerted effort from the various levels of government, business community, and community stakeholders to ensure that the economy continues to grow. Investment in communities yields the greatest results.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Work with municipal governments along the Fraser River, Indigenous groups, the Fraser River Industrial Association, the Federal government, Province, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to develop a Fraser River Revitalization Working Group to create a revitalization roadmap.
2. Create a comprehensive transportation plan that includes the use of electric hybrid boat transportation along the Fraser River to enhance tourism, reduce congestion, and meet provincial greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

17. A FOCUS ON REFUGEES

Issue

The United Nations Refugee Agency says Canada has admitted the largest number of resettled refugees in recent years and has had the second highest rate of refugees who gained citizenship. In 2021, Canada admitted 10,810 government-assisted refugees.⁸⁹ Between January 2015 - November 2021, British Columbia admitted 14,860 refugees.⁹⁰ British Columbia became home to 510 of asylum claimants, who settled in Canada in 2019.⁹¹ Most of the refugees do not speak English, have varying levels of trauma and medical needs, and are learning how to adapt to Canadian society. Their day-to-day settlement needs – finding appropriate housing, furniture, appropriate clothing, food and living costs, enrolling children in school, figuring out the public transit system, finding their way to medical appointments, and finding social and emotional support networks – takes the majority of their time in the first year. In addition, the emotional toll of having left loved ones behind has an understandable impact on their resettlement efforts. Service providers such as Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS), Options and DIVERSEcity have done their best to accommodate these refugees, but wait lists for services, English Language training, basic job-skills training can take multiple weeks.

Background

The concern is that Federal support for publicly sponsored refugees is only for one year. Refugees then apply for Provincial funding, which in BC is much less than the funding that was available from the Federal government for the average family. Funding varies based on size of family and housing needs, as well as health, language instruction and employment services; however, provincial funding, though

⁸⁹ <https://www.statista.com/topics/2897/refugees-in-canada/#:~:text=The%20level%20of%20financial%20aid,admitted%2010%2C810%20government%2Dassisted%20refugees.>

⁹⁰ <https://bcrefugeehub.ca/statistical-bulletin-canada-admissions-of-resettled-refugees-by-province-territory-from-january-2015-november-2021/>

⁹¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2019.html>

similar in base amount, does not include transportation allowances and supplements, leading to a substantial decrease in support especially in the tight housing /rental market of the Lower Mainland.⁹²

Given that it is unreasonable to expect refugees to find sustainable employment within a year of arrival due to waitlists for language and job skills training, as well as family health and emotional needs and the challenges of integration to a very different society, service providers are now advocating for the provincial support to be increased by a value that to help mitigate the impact of transitioning funding sources.

Benefits

A number of refugees have various education backgrounds such as engineering, or other professional credentials. Many have had their education interrupted and would like to continue; however, with lengthy waitlists for English instruction that will expedite employment opportunities, a provincial “top up” of the income assistance (IA) funding will assist refugee families transition until their English becomes relatively proficient. Two key areas are being suggested, including the reinstatement of bus passes for all employable income assistance recipients including refugees who must avail themselves of BC income assistance (BC IA). For those BC IA recipients living outside communities without public transit then a cash equivalent would be provided. Without a transportation allowance it makes it extremely difficult for people to find work and/or attend English language and job-related training. The other policy area relates to the wage claw back mechanism while on BC IA. The wage claw back portion should be increased to fifty percent (50%) or higher to enable refugee newcomers to gain Canadian work experience without a significant claw back of benefits. Currently the federal government provides all government assisted refugees with the ability while on federal income support to earn fifty percent (50%) of their monthly income support without claw back.

It should be noted that between 1979 and 1981, Canada accepted 60,000 “boat people” from Southeast Asia. Within a decade, 86% of those former refugees were working, healthy and spoke English with some proficiency, achieving the basic criteria for success set out by academic Morton Beiser in his landmark study of their integration into Canadian society (*Strangers at the Gate: The Boat People*). They were less likely to use social services and more likely to have jobs than the average Canadian. One in five was self-employed and did not become a drain on the taxpayer—they *were* taxpayers.

In December 2015, Vancity Credit Union released a report entitled: *From Crisis to Community: Syrian Refugees and the B.C. Economy*. The report outlined that Syrian refugees settling in British Columbia would generate at least \$563 million in local economic activity over the next 20 years.⁹³

Canada has a rapidly aging population. Over 6 million Canadians are aged 65 or older, representing 15.6 percent of Canada's population. By 2030—in less than a decade—seniors will number over 9.5 million and make up 23 percent of Canadians. Additionally, by 2036, the average life expectancy at birth for women will rise to 86.2 years from the current 84.2 and to 82.9 years from the current 80 for menⁱ. The demographic shift is expected to shrink work-force participation, erode labour productivity and drive up expenditures for things like elderly benefits. At the same time, the Advisory Council on Economic

⁹² http://www.conferenceboard.ca/commentaries/immigration/default/15-04-08/why_canada_needs_a_national_immigration_action_plan.aspx

⁹³ <https://www.vancity.com/AboutVancity/News/MediaReleases/RefugeesBoostLocalEconomy-Dec2-15/>

Growth advised the Government of Canada to increase immigration levels to 450,000 annually as one step to address the projected challenges to the Canadian economy.

What's needed is not just a discussion of how to facilitate immigration—of refugees and others—but how to ensure our new residents integrate swiftly into the economy. But all of this requires a shift in thinking. Done properly, bringing refugees into our country isn't about charity. It's about investing in the future of business —both theirs and ours.

Challenges

Statistically, only about 10% of refugees find employment in their first year in Canada. The concern is the need for the Province to provide support – in the form of money, increased English classes, additional training, funding for transportation, and career planning – for families that the federal government have accepted until they are sufficiently employable through English and other training. This will be a drain on provincial resources.

There is a need to ensure refugee families continue to be supported beyond the one year federally funded period at a level that provides sufficient economic security to continue with English and employment related training. Policy should include bringing back bus passes for all BC IA recipients or cash equivalent where no public transit exists and increase the amount that BC IA recipients can earn without claw back. Recognizing the challenge to provincial resources, once employed, refugees will be able to contribute back to BC and Canada through taxes as well as economic activity in their community.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government works with the Federal Government to:

1. Extend the federal financial support of refugees from one year to three years;
2. Enhance funding to include transportation and housing support; and,
3. Enhance various education services and career planning supports for refugees.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

18. THE CURE TO CONGESTION – THE NEED FOR RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Issue

Efficient transportation and quality education are the foundations of economic growth and business innovation. Without either, Canada will not be able to thrive in a globally competitive free market. The unreliability of transportation funding, increasing population, and congestion will lead to lower economic growth and stall economic growth.

Background

Over one million new commuters are coming to the Lower Mainland region over the next 20 years. Investing in better, planned, sustainable funded transit and transportation infrastructure is key to reducing congestion, making life more affordable for Metro Vancouver residents, reducing impact on the environment, helping the province of British Columbia as a whole. The Metro Vancouver region is leading ridership growth in North America with more than a 20% increase in the number of people taking transit over the last three years.

The BC Government hopes to reduce the reliance on carbon-creating vehicles. Unfortunately having the same number of cars on the road that are electric will not be of great benefit to the business community (in fact, because operating costs for ZEVs are up to 70% lower than ICE vehicles, electrification of the private vehicle fleet may worsen congestion as people drive more). We need to ensure that our transportation infrastructure has adequate, long-term funding to keep up with population growth and innovations.

The Mayors' Council had advocated for a permanent federal transit fund – with a projected start in 2026⁹⁴ – to help meet demand in the future. We can't wait another three years to take the next steps in expanding Metro Vancouver's transit system. That's why we are asking the federal government to make an immediate commitment – accelerating the implementation to 2024 – to help us accelerate the implementation of Transport 2050: 10-Year Priorities⁹⁵.

The Mayors' Council is asking the federal government to renew its partnership with B.C. and regional leaders to quickly allocate funding to expedite completion of the 10-Year Priorities and maintain the momentum on nation-leading transit expansion and ridership growth. Just by completing the 10-Year Priorities, road congestion can be reduced by up to 20 percent and save commuters as much as 30 minutes on their daily travels.

In order to understand the needs of a region, the Transport 2050 planning process should be supported regardless of political changes. This study will look at population patterns, public policy initiatives underway or planned, fiscal responsibilities, and other variables. Once the study is complete, it is assumed that the need for annual and long-term funding would become apparent.

A concerted effort with adequate levels of funding from the Federal Government will provide benefits to the region for generations. Half-measures and planning that changes with a change of government will only hurt our business community.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Federal Government:

18. In coordination with the Provincial Government, support the Transport 2050 10-Year Priorities planning process which integrate municipal and regional economic and populations growth plans into a long-term, region-wide regional transportation plan designed to reduce congestion, improve mobility, environment and quality of life and support a competitive economy over the next 30 years; and,
19. Accelerate the implementation of the Permanent Federal Transit Fund to begin in 2024 that provides:
 - a. Reliable, predictable funding over a minimum 10-year term; and,
 - b. Funding for a study of the best technology implementation to relieve congestion.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

⁹⁴ <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/transit-transport/consultation-eng.html>

⁹⁵ <https://www.translink.ca/news/2022/april/translink%20unveils%20first%2010%20years%20of%20transport%202050%20priorities>

19. ACCELERATING CRITICAL MINERALS STRATEGIES FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

Issue

According to the International Energy Agency, up to six times more minerals and metals will be needed by 2040 to accelerate the global energy transitions necessary to meet net zero emission commitments for 2050.

Canada and our allies also recognize that changing geopolitical circumstances including, for example, an increasingly authoritarian posture in China and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, means we will require more domestic critical minerals and metals production. These materials are required to decarbonize further and faster, and to help meet collective defence and security objectives.

The federal government released its Critical Minerals Strategy in late 2022. The BC Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation is developing its own strategy for the province. For both strategies to be successful, BC and the federal government must work together for timely and effective execution of near- and medium-term new mines and mine expansions.

Background

The federal government has a list of 31 minerals considered to be critical⁹⁶ with a special focus on six that are considered essential to electric vehicle and battery sectors.⁹⁷ Steel-making coal, which is considered a critical material in the European Union, should be added to Canada's critical minerals list.

B.C. has a generational near-term opportunity as seven new copper, gold and steelmaking coal mines or mine extension projects reach final investment decisions in the next 12-18 months. Together, they represent more than \$4 billion in capital expenditures, 6,400 new construction and operating jobs, significant Indigenous partnerships, and a total economic impact of approximately \$10 billion.

There are ten other medium-term advanced mine developments which will produce copper, nickel, and other critical minerals. BC currently produces about 75 percent of Canada's copper and has substantial opportunities including the world's largest unmined niobium deposit outside of Brazil and two world class nickel deposits. All these opportunities will build on BC's existing portfolio of 17 operating mines and two world-class metallurgical operations at Kitimat and Trail.

Apart from BC being Canada's leading producer of copper, less known is the province's long-standing strengths as a producer of zinc, lead, silver, aluminum, germanium, molybdenum, indium, cadmium, antimony, tellurium, and bismuth among other critical minerals.

BC has seven metallurgical coal mines and 10 metal mines. With one exception, all of BC's mines are powered by clean hydroelectricity. BC's mining industry represents the second largest industrial electricity load in the province. The industry's demand for electricity is set to grow as mines expand, new mines open and mine operator's switch from diesel haul trucks to electric haul trucks. The

⁹⁶ Canadas Critical Mineral List 2021: https://natural-resources.canada.ca/sites/nrcan/files/mineralsmetals/pdf/Critical_Minerals_List_2021-EN.pdf

⁹⁷ Lithium, graphite, nickel, cobalt, copper, and rare earth elements.

expansion of the hydroelectric grid is necessary to increase critical minerals production and ensure BC's mines and smelters continue to have some of the lowest greenhouse gas emissions in the world.

To realize British Columbia's full critical minerals potential to make a meaningful contribution to global climate action, the provincial and federal governments must work together in three key areas:

- a) Permitting and authorizations:
BC mines and mine developments continue to experience interminable delays with existing approaches to regulatory reviews. The permitting and authorization processes that regulate mining projects are too cumbersome, untimely, and inconsistent with the urgent need to meet the rising demand for BC's minerals and metals.
- b) Indigenous economic reconciliation:
With the advent of laws in BC and federally implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, obtaining free prior and informed consent, and facilitating partnership arrangements with Indigenous nations is fundamental to advancing timely development of Canadian critical mineral resources.
- c) Enabling conditions to unleash the potential of BC's critical minerals opportunities:
The full potential of B.C.'s mining and smelting industry requires enabling measures to develop the infrastructure necessary to build and operate mines, smelters, and processing facilities in BC.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS THAT

The Provincial Government:

1. Work closely with the federal government to accelerate the permitting and authorization process for new mines and mine extensions.
2. Provide capacity funding and resources to Indigenous communities to support and increase their participation in government-to-government and shared decision-making processes for critical mineral projects.
3. Work with the federal government to create a benefits-sharing framework to enable Indigenous communities to gain equity stakes in major mining and related infrastructure projects.
4. Work closely with the federal government to expand BC's electrical grid infrastructure to support the electrification and decarbonization of BC's new mines and mine extensions.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

20. MINIMUM WAGE TIED TO CPI – TO BE RELEASED
