

NO: R220

COUNCIL DATE: **NOVEMBER 12, 2013**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **November 5, 2013**
FROM: **Manager, Economic Development** FILE: **MV Ec. Dev.**
SUBJECT: **Metro Vancouver Initiatives in relation to Developing a Regional Economic Strategy and an Online Regional Economic Development Information Resource**

RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager's Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

This report provides information regarding a Metro Vancouver initiative to:

1. Develop a proposed approach to establish a more formalized structure to engage the business community and key stakeholders around a regional economic strategy; and
2. Investigate the concept of an online regional economic development information portal ("clearing house") for use by interested stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Metro Vancouver held two series of forums, one in October 2012 and one April 2013, to discuss regional economic development. The October 2012 series was titled "Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competiveness" and the April 2013 series was titled "Paying for Our Cities."

In September Metro Vancouver forwarded a letter and supporting documents to the City of Surrey regarding the outcomes of each of these series. A copy of each of these letters, dated September 19, 2013, and their respective attachments are attached to this report as Appendices "A" and "B", respectively. The letters advise the City of Surrey that Metro Vancouver will be:

1. Exploring the establishment of a more formalized structure to engage the business community and other key stakeholders around the development of a regional economic strategy; and
2. Investigating the concept of an online regional economic development information portal ("clearing house") for use by interested stakeholders.

Metro Vancouver currently does not have a regional economic strategy or a fulsome source for regional economic development information. A number of related initiatives have been undertaken within the Region in recent years. These are described in the following sections:

Regional Economic Development Sub-Committee (1990's – 2009)

Organized by MV planning staff, the Sub-Committee included representatives of economic development functions from member municipalities across the Region. It met every three months to share information, and discuss regional economic development issues. While the Sub-Committee did not have a formal mandate or call-to-action for regional planning and collaboration, it established a foundation for a more formal collaborative regional effort. The Sub-Committee disbanded in 2009 after agreeing that the Metro Vancouver Commerce group (referenced below) had become the recognized voice for regional economic development initiatives.

Greater Vancouver Economic Council (2003-2006)

Spearheaded by a group of public and private sponsors, the Greater Vancouver Economic Council developed a comprehensive business plan to create a dedicated regional economic development group. Ultimately the proposal did not receive the requested seed funding from the federal government, and as a consequence the GVEC disbanded.

The Case for Regional Collaboration: Economic Development in Greater Vancouver (2006)

A 2006 report “The Case for Regional Collaboration: Economic Development in Greater Vancouver” produced by the City of Vancouver, the City of Surrey and the City of Richmond discussed the potential for a regional approach to economic development. The report concluded that regional collaboration among municipalities can generate more effective results than individual efforts. Some possible areas of collaboration that were viewed as potentially beneficial included:

1. Establishing a region-wide strategic economic plan;
2. Lobbying senior levels of government;
3. Jointly developing data and information resources;
4. Development and pursuing economic opportunities that have broad regional benefits; and
5. Branding the MV Region as a destination of choice for business and skilled workers.

The report was presented to the Metro Vancouver Regional Administrators Advisory Committee and the Metro Vancouver Mayors Committee. As a result of this report, an initiative known as Metro Vancouver Commerce was launched.

Metro Vancouver Commerce (2006 - present)

Metro Vancouver Commerce (MVC) is comprised of economic development managers representing 9 cities in Metro Vancouver. MVC's initial project was the Metro Vancouver 2010 Partnership Investment Program that was focused attracting foreign investment to Vancouver by leveraging the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. The Program hosted 100 global executives from five targeted sectors, which resulted in over \$60 million in new investment into the Region.

MVC has been instrumental in the creation of the recently launched Metro West Inter-Municipal Business License program that allows trades contractors to purchase a single business license that allows them to do business in any of the six partner cities.

Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy

The recently adopted MV Regional Growth Strategy contains land-use strategies to assist in ensuring that the fundamentals are in place for Regional economic development (e.g. industrial lands, employment lands, transportation), but does not include a regional economic strategy.

DISCUSSION

The City of Surrey has been a leader in regional economic development initiatives over the years including the Metro Vancouver Commerce initiative discussed above. It has also been active in relation to the two inter-municipal business license pilot projects (Fraser Valley and Metro West) currently operating in MV and the Fraser Valley.

A fulsome regional economic strategy could generate significant benefits for the Region and the City of Surrey, including:

1. A cohesive vision for regional economic development where member municipalities are working in a complementary manner to one another in attracting investment;
2. A more refined understanding of regional assets in relation to attracting investment;
3. A unified and more powerful voice regarding economic development issues and opportunities including transportation infrastructure and funding;
4. Economies of scale created through joint funding of marketing, sales and research initiatives; and
5. A more competitive position relative to other city-regions in the global marketplace.

Staff views the initiatives that are referenced in the September 19, 2013 letters, respectively, from MV (See Appendices “A” and “B”) as worthy of exploration and dialogue in that they could lead to significant benefits in relation to an expanded Regional economy and Surrey’s economy.

In this regard, staff will work with MV staff in exploring the subject initiatives and will provide further reports to Council complete with recommendations as the initiatives evolve.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The initiatives referenced in the letters from MV to which this report refers, could assist the City of Surrey in achieving the objectives of the City’s Sustainability Charter including:

*“Having a full range of local employment opportunities and green business”; and
“Striving to achieve one local job for every employed resident in Surrey and a range of high-value local jobs in Surrey”.*

They could also assist in achieving the following Charter scope action item:

EC2: Develop an economic development strategy that creates an attractive environment for investment.

CONCLUSION

The initiatives referenced in the letters that were recently received from MV by the City of Surrey (See Appendices “A” and “B”) are considered by staff to be worthy of further exploration. City staff will work with MV staff regarding each of these initiatives and will provide further information and recommendations for Council’s consideration as the initiatives evolve.

Donna Jones
Manager, Economic Development

DJ/mc

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MC 11/5/13 11:54 AM

Attachments:

Appendix “A”: Letter dated September 19, 2013 from Metro Vancouver Re: “Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues Summary Document – Paying for Our Cities.”

Appendix “B”: Letter dated September 19, 2013 from Metro Vancouver Re: “Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness.”



metro vancouver

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Office of the Chair
Tel. 604 432-6215 Fax 604 451-6614
File: CR-07-01

SEP 19 2013

Mayor Dianne Watts and Council
City of Surrey
14245 - 56th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3X 3A2

Dear Mayor ~~Watts~~ ^{DIANNE} and Council:

Re: Board Report on "Paying for Our Cities" Regional Sustainability Dialogue

At its regular meeting of July 26 2013, the Metro Vancouver Board endorsed a recommendation to share the attached report, "Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Paying for Our Cities", with member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment. Given your role as a key stakeholder within our regional economy, Metro Vancouver is pleased to share this report for your information and consideration.

The report details the discussion and outcomes of a recently held Metro Vancouver Sustainability Dialogue series and subsequent Post-Dialogue Forum on "Paying for Our Cities", and more specifically, examines the role that urban centres play in fostering economic growth. The report also includes a recommendation that Metro Vancouver staff develop a proposed approach for the establishment of a more formalized structure to engage the business community and key stakeholders around a regional economic strategy.

In the coming months, I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the opportunities for creation of a new formalized structure with representatives from key stakeholders from across our region with the goal of developing a regional economic strategy.

Should you have any questions or comments about this letter or the attached report, please contact Heather Schoemaker, Director of External Relations, at Heather.Schoemaker@metrovancover.org or at 604-432-6364.

Yours truly,

Greg Moore, MBA
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

GM/HS/sc

cc: Murray Dinwoodie, City Manager, City of Surrey

Encl: Report – dated June 24, 2013, "Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues Summary Document – Paying for Our Cities" (7340374)

7756799

CLERKS DEPT.
0450-01
SEP 24 2013

TO: Council
For Your Information
for Claudia Jarama
CITY CLERK



To: Intergovernmental and Administration Committee

From: Simon Cumming, Stakeholder Engagement Division Manager,
External Relations Department

Date: June 24, 2013 Meeting date: July 11, 2013

Subject: **Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Paying for Our Cities**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board direct staff to develop a proposed approach to establish a more formalized structure to engage the business community and key stakeholders around a regional economic strategy and forward a copy of the *Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Paying for Our Cities* report to member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment.

PURPOSE

To provide the Intergovernmental and Administration Committee with an update on Metro Vancouver’s recent Sustainability Dialogues series and Post-Dialogue Forum on “Paying for Our Cities”.

BACKGROUND

In April 2013, building on the discussions of the November 2012 Regional Finance Symposium, Metro Vancouver hosted a dialogue series on the topic of paying for local government, in which dialogue participants were presented with and discussed the following scenario:

By most accounts the Metro Vancouver region is in an enviable position – renowned for its livability, natural beauty and pursuit of a sustainable future. Yet, the pressure to compete in a global economy combined with a growing population, expanding cities, and aging infrastructure is creating significant regional challenges for local governments and citizens. Services that keep people healthy, safe and active every day – such as transit systems, parks, playgrounds, clean drinking water, recycling services, garbage disposal and waste reduction – are costly. They need infrastructure that must be maintained, renewed and replaced over time. But who pays and how? Are increases in property taxes, user fees or government transfers in the form of grants the answer, and if so, what is the role of different levels of government in easing the burden on citizens? Are there other roles to be played by businesses? What might be the full range of financing and design strategies that can keep our region healthy, safe, livable and sustainable?

Dialogues were hosted in Vancouver (April 9), Surrey (April 10), North Vancouver (April 16) and the Central Northeast sector (April 17), followed by a post-dialogue forum (April 25). Details on the dialogue panelists and discussions, including a video link, can be found in the Attachment - *Dialogues Summary Document – Paying for Our Cities*.

Dialogue Discussion Highlights

The discussions were wide-ranging but focused on two major themes: the role of cities and the funding challenges in meeting expectations. Cities must be competitive in attracting new business and talent but building new infrastructure to accommodate growth while replacing aging systems cannot be accommodated by the existing tax base. The challenge is to develop an equitable and sustainable

method for paying for the range of services provided by local governments. This would involve aligning funding sources with the appropriate services in a financially sustainable and transport manner.

Specific challenges identified by participants included:

1. Across Canada, city regions are accommodating 90% of population growth.
2. Municipalities are compelled to compete against - rather than collaborate with - regional neighbours for limited funding from senior levels of government.
3. Downloading of responsibilities by other orders of government is not accompanied by adequate funding support.
4. Building new and replacing aging infrastructure is creating significant pressure on regional budgets.
5. Federal priorities - i.e. building the national economy and reducing deficit - leaves little scope for funding major infrastructure projects.
6. Canadians increasingly expect their cities to compete globally, but our tax base is much less than other global cities.
7. User pay is not always equitable, so are citizens willing to pay more taxes to invest in infrastructure?
8. What roles should the different levels of government play in easing the burden on individual citizens?
9. Are senior level government grants an efficient way of funding much needed infrastructure upgrades?
10. Governments need to explore opportunities for better collaboration.

Post-Dialogue Forum

At the April 25 post-dialogue forum, it was noted that the dialogue discussion could have benefited from a broader range of views and opinions, in particular engagement of the provincial and federal governments. In addition, some participants felt the lack of a regional economic strategy (an issue also identified at the Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness dialogues) hampered a fulsome discussion on what services local governments need to provide and how those costs could be recovered. Concluding that "we're missing a forum to take this to a broader discussion that engages all stakeholders including the provincial and federal governments", participants suggested an important role for Metro Vancouver would be to convene a forum of interested stakeholders – businesses and business associations, local governments, and others – to discuss what a regional economic strategy might encompass. The request was for Metro Vancouver to act as a facilitator in the process of developing a regional economic strategy that would define the various roles the stakeholders would assume in implementing a strategy. It was recognized that economic development is traditionally the responsibility of the province and a keen interest of municipalities.

Other potential areas for collaboration discussed by participants included:

1. Addressing the funding gap – better align funding sources to responsibilities.
2. Increasing local governments' capacity to generate revenues for service delivery.
3. Finding appropriate balance between the use of property taxes, user fees, and other sources of revenue to fund local services/infrastructure.
4. Ensuring that funding from higher levels of government is sustainable.
5. Increasing transparency - dedicating specific taxes to specific budget line items.
6. Doing things differently
 - Finding new ways to deliver services;
 - Improving asset management strategies;
 - Improving methods of financing infrastructure;
 - Enhancing the involvement of the business community.

7. Encouraging greater regional collaboration: transition from funding through grants to less competitive processes.
8. Sharing the allocation of funding across the region

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to develop a proposed approach to establish a more formalized structure to engage the business community and key stakeholders around a regional economic strategy and forward a copy of the *Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Paying for Our Cities* report to member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment.
2. Receive this report for information and take no further action at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forums form part of the approved 2013 budget for the External Relations Department.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

At its March 14, 2013 meeting, the Intergovernmental and Administrative Committee directed staff to investigate the value of creating a regional economic development "web-based clearing house" that would provide one window for accessing high quality economic development data and information for both the private sector and all levels of government in the region.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues play a key role in stimulating broad discussions on topics of critical importance to the Metro Vancouver region, and in positioning Metro Vancouver as a high-level convener of stakeholders to engage in such discussions. The Paying for Our Cities dialogues and post-dialogue forum continued the discussions of the November 2012 Regional Finance Symposium, discussing the challenges and opportunities to developing an equitable and sustainable method for paying for our cities. Highlights include the need to increase local governments' capacity to generate revenues for service delivery, finding appropriate balance between the use of property taxes, user fees, and other sources of revenue, ensuring that funding from higher levels of government is sustainable, increasing transparency, and "doing things differently" in areas such as service delivery asset management, financing infrastructure and enhancing the involvement of the business community. A key element noted as missing from the discussion was a regional economic strategy.

Adoption of Alternative 1 is recommended.

ATTACHMENT: Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues Summary Document – Paying for Our Cities (*Orbit # 7340024*)

Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues Summary Document

Paying for Our Cities

Metro Vancouver hosted four dialogues on the topic of “Paying for Our Cities”: April 9, 2013 in Vancouver; April 10 in Surrey; April 16 in North Vancouver (serving the North Shore sub-region) and April 17 in Coquitlam (serving the Central Northeast sub-region). The following is a high-level snapshot of dialogue discussions, captured under “challenges” that served as the basis for discussion at a Post-dialogue Forum held April 25, 2013 where specific areas for action and collaboration were identified by the Post-dialogue Forum participants.

Dialogue Descriptor:

By most accounts the Metro Vancouver region is in an enviable position – renowned for its livability, natural beauty and pursuit of a sustainable future. Yet, the pressure to compete in a global economy combined with a growing population, expanding cities, and aging infrastructure is creating significant regional challenges for local governments and citizens. Services that keep people healthy, safe and active every day – such as transit systems, parks, playgrounds, clean drinking water, recycling services, garbage disposal and waste reduction – are costly. They need infrastructure that must be maintained, renewed and replaced over time. But who pays and how? Are increases in property taxes, user fees or government transfers in the form of grants the answer, and if so, what is the role of different levels of government in easing the burden on citizens? Are there other roles to be played by businesses? What might be the full range of financing and design strategies that can keep our region healthy, safe, livable and sustainable?

Dialogue Panelists

- *Raymond Louie, Vice Chair, Metro Vancouver Board of Directors and Councillor, City of Vancouver*
- *Derek Corrigan, Director, Metro Vancouver Board of Directors, and Mayor, City of Burnaby*
- *Linda Hepner, Director, Metro Vancouver Board of Directors and Councillor, City of Surrey*
- *Richard Walton, Director, Metro Vancouver Board of Directors, and Mayor, District of North Vancouver*
- *Wayne Wright, Director, Metro Vancouver Board of Directors, and Mayor, City of New Westminster*
- *Casey Vander Ploeg, Senior Policy Analyst, Canada West Foundation*
- *Ian Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer, Translink*
- *Winnie Shi, Partner, KPMG Management Consulting*
- *Siku Adam, Partner, KPMG Management Consulting,*
- *Michael Buda, Director, Policy and Research, Federation of Canadian Municipalities*
- *Alastair Nimmons, Partner, KPMG Management Consulting*
- *Cathy McClay, Chief Financial Officer and Executive VP, Finance and Corporate Services for TransLink*
- *Julius Pataky, Partner, KPMG Management Consulting*
- *Cathy McClay, Chief Financial Officer and Executive VP, Finance and Corporate Services for TransLink*



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Dialogue Attendance:

- In person attendance included: Vancouver, 114; Surrey, 22; North Shore, 57; Central Northeast, 21; Post-Dialogue Forum, 35.
- The dialogues were also livestreamed, bringing in another 75 viewers and the April 9th Vancouver dialogue was aired on Shaw, Delta, Novus from June 5 - June 19 engaging another 6–10,000 viewers.

To view the dialogue discussions, please click here <http://bcove.me/5ita18n3>

Challenges:

1. Across Canada, city regions are accommodating 90% of population growth.
2. Municipalities are compelled to compete against - rather than collaborate with - regional neighbours for limited funding from senior levels of government.
3. Downloading of responsibilities by other orders of government is not accompanied by adequate funding support.
4. Building new and replacing aging infrastructure is creating significant pressure on regional budgets.
5. Federal priorities - i.e. building the national economy and reducing deficit - leaves little scope for funding major infrastructure projects.
6. Canadians increasingly expect their cities to compete globally, but our tax base is much less than other global cities.
7. User pay is not always equitable, so are citizens willing to pay more taxes to invest in infrastructure?
8. What roles should the different levels of government play in easing the burden on individual citizens?
9. Are senior level government grants an efficient way of funding much needed infrastructure upgrades?
10. Governments need to explore opportunities for better collaboration.

Areas for Collaboration:

1. Addressing the funding gap – better align funding sources to responsibilities.
2. Increasing local governments' capacity to generate revenues for service delivery.
3. Finding appropriate balance between the use of property taxes, user fees, and other sources of revenue to fund local services/infrastructure.
4. Ensuring that funding from higher levels of government is sustainable.
5. Increasing transparency - dedicating specific taxes to specific budget line items.
6. Doing things differently:
 - (a) Finding new ways to deliver services.
 - (b) Improving asset management strategies.
 - (c) Improving methods of financing infrastructure.
 - (d) Enhancing the involvement of the business community.
7. Encouraging greater regional collaboration: transition from funding through grants to less competitive processes.
8. Sharing the allocation of funding across the region.



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Recommended Next Steps:

Convening of a high-level forum of interested stakeholders – businesses and business associations, local governments, and others – to discuss the regional economy, what a regional economic strategy might look like, and what role(s) the various stakeholders could take on to help deliver that strategy.



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SEP 19 2013

File: CR-07-01

Mayor Dianne Watts and Council
City of Surrey
14245 - 56th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3X 3A2

Dear Mayor ~~Watts~~ ^{DIANNE} and Council:

Re: Board Report on "Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness"

At its regular meeting of April 12 2013, the Metro Vancouver Board endorsed a recommendation to share the attached report, "Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness", with member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment. Given your role as a key stakeholder within our regional economy, Metro Vancouver is pleased to share this report for your information and consideration.

The report details the discussion and outcomes of a recently held Metro Vancouver Sustainability Dialogue series and subsequent Post-Dialogue Forum on "Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness", and more specifically, identifies areas for potential regional collaboration, such as realigning workforce and skills development, strengthening regional collaboration and brand development, and investing in economic/social infrastructure and business development. The report also includes a recommendation that Metro Vancouver staff investigate the concept of regional economic development "clearing house" for use by interested stakeholders, a recommendation that Metro Vancouver staff is currently implementing.

In the coming months, I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the opportunities for creation of a new formalized structure with representatives from key stakeholders from across our region with the goal of developing a regional economic strategy.

Should you have any questions or comments about this letter or the attached report, please contact Heather Schoemaker, Director of External Relations, at Heather.Schoemaker@metrovancover.org or at 604-432-6364.

Yours truly,

Greg Moore, MBA
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

GM/HS/sc

cc: Murray Dinwoodie, City Manager, City of Surrey

Encl: Report – dated March 20, 2013, "Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness" (7173539)

7756722

CLERKS DEPT.
0450-01
SEP 24 2013

TO: Council
For Your Information
to Claudia J...
RAD
CITY CLERK



To: GVRD Board of Directors

From: Intergovernmental and Administration Committee

Date: March 20, 2013 **Meeting Date:** April 12, 2013

Subject: **Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness**

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

- a) forward the March 1, 2013 report titled *“Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness”* to member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment; and
 - b) direct staff to investigate a regional economic development “clearing house”.
-

At its March 14, 2013 meeting, the Intergovernmental and Administration Committee considered the attached report titled *“Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness”*, dated March 1, 2013. The Committee subsequently amended the recommendation as presented above in underline style.

Attachment:

Report titled *“Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness”*, dated March 1, 2013

To: Intergovernmental and Administration Committee

From: Simon Cumming, Stakeholder Engagement Division Manager,
External Relations Department

Date: March 1, 2013 **Meeting date:** March 14, 2013

Subject: **Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board forward the March 1, 2013 report titled *“Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness”* to member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment.

PURPOSE

To provide the Intergovernmental and Administration Committee with an update on Metro Vancouver’s recently completed Sustainability Dialogues series and Post-Dialogue Forum on “Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness”.

BACKGROUND

Metro Vancouver’s Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues, which have been hosted in partnership with local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade since 2006, is a series of dynamic high-profile discussions intended to help decision-makers shape the future of the region by presenting a range of views to stimulate fresh thought on regional issues.

Since 2010, each dialogue series has been followed by a post-dialogue forum that aims to move from discussion to action by convening a small group of dialogue participants, panelists, subject matter experts and appropriate Metro Vancouver staff and directors to review and assess on the outcomes of the dialogues and identify action areas for the consideration of the Metro Vancouver Board and other community organizations.

In October of 2012, Metro Vancouver hosted a dialogue series on the topic of the regional economy, in which dialogue participants were presented with the following scenario:

Around the world, economic competitiveness and prosperity are being strategically shaped at the metropolitan level. With one million more people expected to call Metro Vancouver home over the coming years, is it time to take stock of the factors driving our regional economy? What type of jobs do we want to grow, what assets can we leverage, and what challenges must we address? Are a growing income gap, a low median household income, and a high cost of living constraining our ability to prosper as a region - to attract and keep talent? Is the way we move people and goods through the region consistent with regional livability and prosperity objectives? Join us to discuss how to shape our regional prosperity in a changing world.

Dialogues were hosted in Vancouver (October 9), the North Shore (October 16), the Central Northeast (October 18) and Surrey (October 30), followed by a post-dialogue forum (January 16, 2013). For details on the panelists recruited for each dialogue, please see Appendix A, "Dialogues Summary Document – Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness."

DISCUSSION

Dialogue participants and panelists identified a number of obstacles to the maintenance of a vibrant and competitive local economy, and explored several specific areas for action; four broad themes emerged and are outlined below. Throughout the dialogues there was a strong emphasis on identifying and building improved partnership opportunities among regional stakeholders, and participants also noted the need for policy reform over new policy and program development, to better address issues of affordability, workforce development and other key issues. Outreach and awareness building initiatives were largely identified, as they relate to the need for a distinct regional brand with global impact and reach.

The obstacles to shaping regional prosperity and competitiveness identified by dialogue participants include:

- A general lack of understanding of regional strengths and weaknesses, including sub-regional attributes and assets;
- The high cost of living and general lack of affordability in the region;
- Skills shortages in areas relevant to a new emerging economy;
- A lack of adequate consideration to regional transportation and the movement of goods;
- Limited understanding of the manufacturing and technology sectors and their potential contribution to regional economic development;
- A regional brand that although fairly strong, is largely Vancouver-focused;
- Lack of a shared definition of economic growth that values non-monetary prosperity.

And the potential areas for collaboration developed by participants include:

- Re-align workforce and skills development;
- Strengthen regional collaboration and brand development;
- Invest in economic infrastructure and business development;
- Invest in social infrastructure.

At the January 16 post-dialogue forum, participants generally agreed that in terms of obstacles, there were three specific areas that needed to be addressed:

- Lack of understanding of regional strengths and weaknesses, including sub-regional attributes and assets (better generally characterized as lack of knowledge);
- High cost of living and lack of affordability; and
- Lack of coordination/communication/collaboration at the regional level.

Participants also discussed the need to re-align workforce and skills development to better meet the emerging labour market as well as the need to consider the "social" aspect to economic development; the interconnectivity between social and economic goals was also highlighted as was the need for continued investment in social programs.

In terms of concrete actions arising from the dialogues/post-dialogue forum, participants agreed that there is a definite need to enhance the quality of economic development information available

across the region as to the availability of business development opportunities and the nature and location of industry hubs, and to have one point of entry (a one stop, regional economic development "clearing house") that would allow multiple users to share/distribute that information and better promote the region.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Forward the March 1, 2013 report titled "*Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues and Post-Dialogue Forum: Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness*" to member municipalities and other related agencies for their information and comment.
2. Direct staff to investigate a regional economic development "clearing house".
3. Receive this report for information and take no further action at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no financial impact for alternative 1.

If the Board chooses alternative 2, the report will still be circulated, however, staff will also come back to the committee with a strategy and costs for a regional economic development "clearing house". This is not an action identified in any departmental work plans at Metro Vancouver for fiscal year 2013 and there are limited staff resources available to undertake this additional work.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues play a key role in stimulating broad discussions on topics of critical importance to the Metro Vancouver region, and in positioning Metro Vancouver as a high-level convener of stakeholders to engage in such discussions. The October series on "Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness" identified areas for regional collaboration such as the need to re-align workforce and skills development, strengthen regional collaboration and brand development, invest in economic infrastructure and business development and invest in social infrastructure. It also identified obstacles to achieving regional prosperity including a lack of understanding and awareness of regional strengths and weaknesses, including sub-regional attributes and assets (better generally characterized as lack of knowledge), the high cost of living and lack of affordability; and the Lack of coordination/communication/collaboration at the regional level.

In terms of concrete actions, participants identified a need to enhance the quality of economic development information available across the region through the development of a one stop, regional economic development "clearing house". Based on limited staff resources at the current time to undertake such an initiative, staff recommends adoption of alternative one.

Attachment:

Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness – Post Event Summary (7128111)

Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues

Shaping Regional Prosperity and Competitiveness

Metro Vancouver hosted four dialogues on the topic of shaping regional prosperity and competitiveness: October 9, 2012 in Vancouver; October 16, 2012 in North Vancouver (serving the North Shore sub-region) October 18, 2012 in Coquitlam (serving the Central Northeast sub-region), and October 30, 2012 in Surrey (serving the South of Fraser sub-region). The following is a high-level snapshot of dialogue discussions that served as the basis for discussion at a Post-dialogue Forum held January 16, 2013. This document has been revised to reflect feedback from Post-dialogue Forum participants, and sets out challenges and areas for action and collaboration.

Dialogue Descriptor:

Around the world, economic competitiveness and prosperity are being strategically shaped at the metropolitan level. With one million more people expected to call Metro Vancouver home over the coming years, is it time to take stock of the factors driving our regional economy? What type of jobs do we want to grow, what assets can we leverage, and what challenges must we address? Are a growing income gap, a low median household income, and a high cost of living constraining our ability to prosper as a region - to attract and keep talent? Is the way we move people and goods through the region consistent with regional livability and prosperity objectives? Join us to discuss how to shape our regional prosperity in a changing world.

Dialogue Panelists

- *Sandy Blue*, Manager, Strategic Economic Initiatives, District of Maple Ridge
- *Don Cayo*, Columnist, The Vancouver Sun
- *Lorraine Copas*, Executive Director, SPARC of BC
- *Michael Goldberg*, Professor and Dean Emeritus, Sauder School of Business, UBC
- *Peter Jeffrey*, VP, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters BC
- *Jean Lamontagne*, General Manager of Planning & Development, City of Surrey
- *Lee Malleau*, CEO, Vancouver Economic Commission
- *Gary Penway*, Director, Community Development Department, City of North Vancouver
- *Bill Tam*, CEO, BC Technology Industry Association

Challenges

- Lack of understanding of regional strengths and weaknesses, including sub-regional attributes and assets.
- High cost of living and lack of affordability.
- Skills shortage in areas relevant to a new emerging economy.
- Lack of adequate consideration to regional transportation and the movement of goods.
- Limited understanding of the manufacturing and technology sectors and their potential contribution to regional economic development.



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- A brand that is strong, but largely Vancouver-based.
- Lack of a shared definition of economic growth that values non-monetary prosperity.

Areas for Action and Collaboration

Dialogue participants and panelists explored different areas for action; four broad themes emerged and are outlined below. Throughout the dialogues there was a strong emphasis on building, and better identifying, partnership opportunities among regional stakeholders. Participants also noted the need for policy reform over new policy and program development, to better address issues of affordability, workforce development and other key issues. Outreach and awareness building initiatives were largely identified in relation to the need for a distinct regional brand with global impact and reach.

1. Re-align workforce and skills development

- 1.1 Support mentoring and training in manufacturing, technology and other non-traditional fields where demand and prospects are high; possibly honing in on new immigrants, the Aboriginal sector or other under-utilized segments of the workforce.
- 1.2 Strengthen partnerships and encourage dialogue with academic institutions to ensure education opportunities match the skills and training in emerging fields.
- 1.3 Increase the number and quality of programs that help students transition into the workforce – e.g., through early mentoring, apprenticeship, etc.

2. Invest in economic infrastructure and business development

- 2.1 Ensure businesses have appropriate places to locate, through land use planning and the protection of industrial lands in OCPs, including ensuring these business areas are well served through public transit.
- 2.2 Secure long-term and stable funding for transit, and focus on the efficient movement of goods and people throughout the region as way to improve competitiveness.
- 2.3 Focus on building complete communities to address transit; creating a diversified and stable tax base; and providing more affordable housing.
- 2.4 Consider ways to create an enabling environment for business, including:
 - 2.4.1 reducing red tape for business development approvals and innovation (i.e. grow and expand mobile business licensing; one-stop shop permitting);
 - 2.4.2 establishing competitive tax policies (e.g. a fair commercial-to-residential property tax ratio); and
 - 2.4.3 developing procurement policies that give greater consideration to local ('home team') companies.



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3. Strengthen regional collaboration and brand development

- 3.1 Expand and promote a distinct regional brand that identifies and capitalizes on regional assets (e.g., diversity, livability, sustainability) and that articulates a strong current and future identity.
- 3.2 Foster strong relationships and an open dialogue with the business community, specifically the manufacturing and technology sectors, to promote long-term understanding of issues and opportunities for strategic collaboration.
- 3.3 Work with industry and business associations, and key municipal representatives to develop a robust regional knowledge base – a document or website setting out baseline information on sub-regional, regional and key sector strengths and attributes that could be used by many stakeholders when promoting the region.
- 3.4 Continue public dialogues on regional quality of life issues that impact on our ability to prosper and compete globally.

4. Invest in social infrastructure

- 4.1 Increase funding and investment in post-secondary education and training.
- 4.2 Focus on children and youth to drive long-term prosperity (in particular, prenatal care, safety and nutrition for children in the early years, and preparation for formal schooling after age five).
- 4.3 Identify policy reforms aimed at improving housing affordability and providing universal access to education.
- 4.4 Better position cultural diversity as an asset and consider ways to improve the placement of skilled immigrants in jobs that match their training and education.



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