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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greater Victoria, like the rest of the world, has faced a sudden drop in economic activity associated with the measures taken to contain and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our region is heavily dependent on the service industries that are most impacted by the pandemic – tourism, retail and hospitality. Because of this, the Conference Board of Canada warns that Greater Victoria is one of Canada’s five most negatively affected cities when measured in expected job losses.

The Rising Economy Taskforce, launched on April 16, 2020, sets out to develop and prioritize key actions and recommendations on economic recovery as informed by 11 independent, sector-driven committees. Taskforce members include representatives from major local employers, First Nations, municipal governments, post-secondary institutions, nonprofits and social enterprises. The mission of the Taskforce is to accelerate economic recovery in the South Island region while ensuring that recovery is inclusive and builds resiliency against future economic shocks.

The reports included in this document are from the following committees: Agriculture; Food and Beverage; Education and Skills; Inclusive Economy; Indigenous Economy; Oceans and Marine; Real Estate and Construction; Retail, Services and Restaurants; Technology and Advanced Manufacturing; Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation; and Transportation.

A Region-Wide Response

Between now and November 2020, the Taskforce will establish recovery priorities for the region that are inclusive, maximize the positive impacts on the economy, and help coordinate recovery actions that build resilience. This will include helping stakeholders to identify common interests and to develop partnerships to help the region build back better than before. As recovery begins, the Taskforce will help measure our progress through a monthly economic dashboard and communicate priorities to all levels of government.

Engaging Industry Expertise

The sector committees conducted research, analysis and industry consultations to understand the pandemic’s effects on their respective sectors and identify catalysts for rapid recovery. We are seeing that the region’s recovery is highly uneven. The real estate, development and construction sectors, for example, have rebounded well, with July home sales volumes exceeding the 2019 figures. But this may mask the fact that we are extremely dependent on the hardest-hit sectors, such as retail, tourism and hospitality. This has led to unemployment remaining staggeringly high, increasing from the lowest in Canada at 3.4% in February to 7.2% in April — and above 10% for the last three months since then.

This unprecedented economic shock has revealed some uncomfortable truths about our economy’s resilience and has highlighted the urgent need for diversification. Several months into the pandemic, we still do not have the full picture of the long-term impacts to come. There are still many large looming
unknowns that could continue to hold back economic recovery – such as rising unemployment and increasing debt, potential business closures, reduced immigration, and uncertainty about the long-term effects of COVID-19. For example, Restaurants Canada released a report in July that predicts the sector will lose anywhere from $4 billion to $7.5 billion by the end of the year.

**An Inclusive Foundation**

Central to the Taskforce’s guiding philosophy is that people are the basis of our economy and that recovery efforts must put people at the centre of planning. Not only are the negative consequences of the pandemic disproportionately affecting various sectors (e.g., tourism, retail, etc.) but also certain segments of the population (e.g., women, immigrants, part-time workers, visible minorities, etc.). As a consequence, economic recovery must address these unique differences.

The committee reports presented here reflect his approach. While the South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) is the convener of the Rising Economy Taskforce, it is not the owner of the process. Between May and August 2020, each of the Taskforce’s committees undertook thorough research, including broad engagement with each sector through surveys and focus groups. The Taskforce also set up an Inclusive Economy Committee and an Indigenous Economy Committee to ensure that all people and sectors are included in the region’s recovery planning. The result is a series of committee recommendations identifying short and long-term actions to support the region.

**Emerging Themes**

As the Taskforce further develops a recovery plan, a number of key themes have emerged across committees:

- **Small business solvency in the short-term.** Across sectors there are a number of businesses that may not survive, which will lead to job losses, bankruptcies and vacant commercial space.

- **Interconnectivity of the regional economy.** Business and economic success across the metro-region are deeply interconnected. Full recovery will need all sectors showing signs of normalcy.

- **Uneven resiliency to changes forced by the pandemic.** Access to digital infrastructure and skills is not universal and will be essential to recovery. Investments in public digital infrastructure and skills development from all layers of government will be required.

- **Uneven impacts on people.** Indigenous communities, women, women with children, newcomers, and visible minorities have been disproportionately impacted. An inclusive economic recovery will require dedicated support to transition unemployed and underemployed workers into new opportunities.

- **Uneven impacts within and between sectors.** Some sectors and commercial areas in the region have thrived, while others have struggled. An uneven recovery will have lasting effects on and therefore addressing the uneven nature of pandemic impacts: sectors (local food strong, retail weak, ocean/marine remaining strong, tourism transportation suffering.
• **Uncertainty of the long-term impact.** The long-term impacts of border closures, the transition to working from home, consumer behaviours, and the mainstreet economy remain unclear.

**Emerging Recommendations**

Recommendations put forward include a range of response themes with the recognition that addressing each one would require multiple levels of government and stakeholders. There are many emerging recommendations, including the following:

• **Expand access to financial support.** This includes wage subsidies, investment capital, infrastructure development and other resources to help businesses stay solvent.

• **Invest in the future workforce.** Mobilize cross-sector initiatives to support upskilling, micro-credentialing and other skill-building opportunities to increase access to family-supporting jobs. Expand partnerships to increase access, innovation and collaboration in the region.

• **Strengthen local.** Expand and promote initiatives like Buy BC, ShopLocalYYJ and agrotourism initiatives to strengthen local business and supply chains.

• **Regulate Responsibly.** Help businesses adapt by creating a responsive regulatory environment.

• **Invest in inclusion.** Ensure Indigenous workers and businesses, women, newcomers, visible minorities, unemployed and underemployed people are fully included in recovery and long-term planning efforts.

• **Leverage our strengths.** There are areas of opportunity and growth that can be capitalized on by coordinating strategic responses across sectors.

**Next Steps**

Drawing on the committee reports, the Rising Economy Taskforce will now turn its attention to prioritizing key themes across committee reports and developing a regional economic recovery strategy that will move the needle on the region’s recovery within an 18-month period. The Taskforce will present the regional economic recovery strategy during Rising Economy Week from November 16 to 20, 2020.

Over the next few weeks, SIPP will identify immediate actions that can be taken, including quick wins that leverage existing projects as well as advocacy to policymakers. The committee reports serve as a foundation to foster partnerships and collaborative responses across industry, academia, the social sector, all levels of government and the general public.

Historic economic challenges of this scale require intense collaboration, commitment and energy, and the scale of collaboration on this Taskforce has risen to the task. These efforts are crucial to help our region recover from the current recession and develop resiliency to withstand future economic shocks. Together, we will rebound faster, dream bigger and prosper more.
II. Rising Economy Taskforce Committee Reports
Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically altered how people obtain food, drink and produce. Typically, small- to medium-sized agribusinesses make their largest profits from restaurants, bars, agrotourism and farmers’ markets, all of which have been hard hit by the pandemic. For example, the committee found beer sales to restaurants and bars dropped by more than 90% at the shutdown onset and have only come back 50% through June 2020. This has been partially offset by increasing sales through direct retail channels, but overall business is still 5% to 10% below pre-COVID 19 volumes. Similar shifts in channels have occurred with locally produced agriculture moving from restaurants and farmer’s markets to direct and online sales.

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee prepared this report to assist in the South Island’s economic recovery from COVID-19 and build a more resilient sector for the future. Many barriers exist for generally smaller, local suppliers trying to access larger retailer sales channels. In contrast, larger national and international suppliers are better positioned to do this, having mastered the supply chain, packaging, volume, margins and quality processes demanded by multinationals and retail chains.

Recent reports show Vancouver Island-based agriculture represents less than 15% of total food and beverage sales on the Island and the potential for increased sales is immense.

Many of the committee’s recommendations are designed to help move the South Island’s products into these larger channels to market. Expansion of sales to as many outlets as possible will help with both short-term recovery and future sector resilience.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

Recommendation A: The provincial government must build on Buy BC and Feed BC initiatives’ success and create a complementary program – Sell BC.

Buy BC is an awareness program that encourages individual consumers to buy local produce. The creation of an equivalent program is needed to encourage businesses such as public and private liquor stores, grocery chains and institutional buyers to sell local food and liquor.

Currently, most agrobusiness operations face barriers to approaching large retailers due to a mismatch of operational size and capability. This issue existed before COVID-19, but the pandemic has made it crucial that agrobusinesses diversify and sell to large retailers. Overcoming barriers to this will ensure viability in the short term while restaurants are recovering and build more robust channels for longer-term sector resilience. The Sell BC program would better connect small, local suppliers with big business.

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee recommends:

- **Support local suppliers to create overarching collaborative organizations.** Overarching organizations of local suppliers would allow large retailers to work with one large body rather than many small, disparate ones. Through this agency, common practices and standards could be adopted at a local level. Fixing the disjointed local supply chain would help incentivize large grocery chains to sell local goods. Many sub-segments such as the Craft Brewers Association have strong working models that may serve as examples for other segments.

- **Streamline the local cider and beer sales process for the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (BCLDB).** Specialized BCLDB buyers would work directly with local producers and their collaborative organizations to reduce barriers, set a target for the percentage of sales for local beer and cider, and market local products to customers. Working with local producers in this way would provide a broader range of products for BCLDB consumers. The current BCLDB buyers are now responsible for the entire range of products from multi-national suppliers and local smaller suppliers. A dedicated supplier would allow a specific focus on the local suppliers to increase market share.

- **Enhance buying local promotion.** Buying local allows consumers to make a difference in their communities economically (local dollars to local farmers), environmentally (fewer greenhouse gases in food transport) and socially (supporting farmers to support their families). The local multiplier effect suggests 1.5 to 2.4x² for every dollar spent on local produce will be further spent in the local economy and raise the economic resilience of all sectors. Funding could be provided to increase this messaging – not just to consumers but to businesses as well. This funding could also enhance existing opportunities such as the ShopLocalYYJ program, encouraging Chamber of Commerce members to buy from one another directly, and include brewers and cideries in the Flavour Trails initiative offered by Destination Greater Victoria.

- **Build on existing programs between retailers and suppliers/producers.** Closing the Supply Gap³ and Island Good⁴ are two programs already working to increase local foods and liquor sales in large retailers. Further funding and support will increase the visibility and promotion of these initiatives.

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² [https://sustainontario.com/2012/07/04/multiplier-effect/](https://sustainontario.com/2012/07/04/multiplier-effect/)
³ [http://www.crfair.ca/closing-the-supply-gap](http://www.crfair.ca/closing-the-supply-gap)
⁴ [http://www.islandgood.ca](http://www.islandgood.ca)

Rising Economy Taskforce Committee Reports, South Island Prosperity Partnership, August 27, 2020
Recommendation B: Tourism organizations and governments must focus on implementing, supporting and expanding agrotourism initiatives.

Before COVID-19, visiting farms, wineries, breweries and cideries was a growing and profitable branch of tourism. However, with substantial gathering restrictions in place, this market channel has been dramatically reduced and is only slowly restarting.

More than just a means to sell products, agrotourism sells experiences and exposes people to possible employment and investment opportunities. Many farms, wineries and cideries have been willing to invest in becoming tour operators, which has resulted in higher sales and better exposure. One of the fastest-growing tourist segments relates to craft beer, wine and cider tours.\(^5\)

To help this burgeoning sub-industry recover through 2020 and grow through 2021, the Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee recommends:

- **Build on existing programs.** Expanding existing programs to encourage visiting, buying, eating and drinking local within safe parameters will help rebuild agrotourism and lay the groundwork for future growth. Programs include the original agrotourism initiative with Destination Greater Victoria and its Flavour Trails concept and the staycation campaign launched by Tourism BC.

- **Streamline regulations** to allow farms that can easily cater to physical distancing regulations to become agrotourism destinations. Currently, the approval process for licensing, seating and event planning can take two to three years. This process must be faster to support recovery and growth in agrotourism.

- **Provide funding to train staff and businesses** in agrotourism experiences, customer service, digital proficiency and site presentation.

- **Partner with post-secondary institutions.** Research opportunities exist between the agro sector and local post-secondary institutions (e.g., the University of Victoria, Camosun College, Royal Roads University). Examples can span agriculture practices, from business planning and marketing support to financial modeling for existing and prospective operations. An example of this is already being tested locally for Sea Cider Farm and Cidery and can help agro operations pivot to new opportunities more quickly and profitably.

**Recommendation C: The provincial government, the education sector and agriculture organizations must partner to address the constrained labour supply.**

Labour supply\(^6\) in the agrobusiness sector was a challenge even before COVID-19 — and this situation continues today. The provincial government’s initiative to pay temporary foreign workers for the

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\(^6\) The reported average employment in agriculture in British Columbia from January 2020 to June 2020 is 27,000, a 2.9% increase from the previous cycle in 2019 (Source: Government of BC).
quarantine period was necessary to deal with short-term supply issues during the pandemic. Still, longer-term solutions must be enacted. New entrants must be enticed into the businesses, while current employees must be able to upskill and retiring farm operators must have new operators to mentor. At present, labour supply is constraining growth in this sector.7

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee recommends:

- **Develop programs to engage youth and young adults.** These would be modeled after the sampler programs offered in trades training. Youth would be exposed to farming, processing, management, brewing, butchering, agrotourism, and more and would have the opportunity to sample several aspects of agrobusiness to find their best fit.

- **Develop apprenticeships for farmers and producers.** Currently, there is no clear path into the agrobusiness. An apprenticeship program designed and delivered in partnership with high schools, trade schools, farmers, producers and local agriculture groups would provide a clear pathway.

- **Create a mentorship program** between new farmers and farmers who are aging out of the profession.

- **Provide funding for seasonal staffing issues.** For example, there is no funding for youth to participate in the seasonal workforce, nor is there funding for basic training programs like Food Safe.

**Recommendation D: The provincial government and financial institutions must tailor financing models to the unique needs of agro-businesses.**

Many farms operate in extreme debt, and the pandemic has significantly worsened this situation. Massive capital investments are required to start, grow and maintain agrobusinesses. Short-term relief must be made available coupled with innovative long-term solutions. The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee recommends:

- **Create short-term relief opportunities**, including interest deferrals and principal repayments.

- **Conduct a jurisdictional scan of long-term, made-to-fit financing solutions for farmers and producers.** Investigating other jurisdictions in Canada, the U.S. and Europe may reveal financing and lending models that are a better fit for the industry.

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3. BACKGROUND

Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the region’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

● create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

● identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

● provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

● help coordinate recovery activities for the region by assisting stakeholders in identifying common interests and developing partnerships;

● ensure that the plan informs — and is informed — by broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is segmented into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

● Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).

● Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.

● Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identify goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. The Regional Economic Recovery Plan will include these recommendations.

● Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivot to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee represents the broad set of businesses and enterprises associated with agriculture (farmers, producers, distributors, retailers) and food and beverage
(breweries, cideries, processors) in the South Island region. While many issues and opportunities are unique to this community, the issues identified by most of the other committees are experienced within this sector.

**Committee Members**

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee was selected for its experience, diversity, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. The Committee is represented by:

- David Nicholls (Co-Chair), Co-Owner, Vancouver Island Brewing
- Jacques van Campen (Co-Chair), Director of Innovation, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Linda Geggie, Executive Director, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR)
- Kristin Needham, Owner, Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse
- Steve Pearce, Board President, Think Local First
- Lindsay Dault, Owner, Country Bee Honey Farm
- Candice Appleby, Executive Director, Small Scale Food Processors Association
- Ben Clark, Consultant, The Delphi Group
- Patricia Reichert, Food Systems Specialist, Closing the Supply Gap
  Bill Collins (Advisor), President, Cascadia Seaweed

Additionally, other members of this community provided insight and feedback to the committee throughout the process.

**Summary of Process and Research Findings**

The Agriculture, Food and Beverage Committee was struck on May 29 and met four times over the following two months. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to key community and industry respondents. The committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used future-casting workshops to identify the recommendations, ideas and actions highlighted in this document.

*To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.*
### Education and Skills Development Committee Report

#### 1. ISSUE

The South Island’s education sector is committed to reducing the impact of the pandemic-induced recession and accelerating recovery as we build our economy back better than ever. Through research, innovation and skills enhancement, this sector will play a critical role in combating the challenges brought on by the pandemic. As The Economist noted in its July 25, 2020 feature “Revive, then thrive,” the places that have designed the most successful recovery strategies are those that invest the most in their people. The economy is the sum of its people.

Education is a proven recipe for sustainable success. According to The Economist article, “cities with the deepest pools of talented workers tend to be the long-term winners.” To that end, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently noted that regions that invest most in digital infrastructure and social spending — including education — will be the long-term global winners as we emerge from this deep global recession. Southern Vancouver Island’s post-secondary system is one of the best in the country – collaborative, inclusive, supportive and high-quality. All of these attributes position the region well.

The recession has caused massive unemployment, and it is unclear how long these job losses will be sustained, particularly in the most impacted service sectors. At the same time, the education sector must play a pivotal role in preparing the workforce for tomorrow’s jobs. Technology, automation, digitalization and climate change are affecting jobs and skills in demand.

The pandemic has vastly accelerated this trend. To survive, businesses must quickly enter the digital economy, learn to work remotely and develop e-commerce practices while implementing new health and safety measures. To meet this need, employers and employees alike must upskill and retrain. Learning is no longer a luxury — it has become a survival strategy.

This report highlights these economic and skills challenges, along with possible solutions. The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**For all partners**

**Recommendation A:** The provincial and federal governments should partner with private industry and post-secondary institutions to create a Future Skills Council, a public-private research and action

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9 A recent survey by McKinsey & Company (January 2020) found 87% of companies are either experiencing skill gaps now or expect them within five years.
alliance to ensure that training and education are developed for industry and societal needs. The Committee recommends:

- **Bring together industry with all levels of government and the post-secondary and private education sectors, to understand the impacts of a service-led recession on Greater Victoria.** The Future Skills Council could conduct primary research through employer surveys, interviews and focus groups, and make recommendations for workforce development and training. The Council will provide real-time labour-market gap information and build more connectivity between the private and the education sectors. This effort will complement the work being done by the provincial government through the Labour Market Information Office and WorkBC. It will address the need for localized, real-time information in the wake of the current recession.

- **Provide timely, up-to-date labour market information and assess future skills needs and labour force trends and gaps.** Which skills are currently in demand? Which skills are becoming obsolete and at what rate? Which skills are needed for the future? To answer these questions, the Future Skills Council could pilot innovative approaches such as using Artificial Intelligence and data to assess current workforce needs and emerging trends.

- **Provide recommendations for skills development associated with skills gaps in growing industries/sectors,** such as cleantech, edtech, fintech and oceantech, and targeted population groups, such as Indigenous peoples, women, racialized Canadians and recent immigrants.

- **Create an information hub** by producing market information and research to private industry, investors and the public sector and sharing best practices and information. For example, knowledge could be shared on how to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in economic recovery and growth and how to boost retention of international students in the South Island region.

- **Support Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities.** The province and employers must invest in innovative WIL opportunities for the recovering economy. The need for more WIL opportunities was identified throughout the education sector before the pandemic. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for our students to be more resilient, flexible, and better trained, all of which are WIL outcomes. Other WIL opportunities should include:
  - **Taking WIL online.** Since the beginning of the pandemic, employees have adapted to remote work to continue their employment, but WIL opportunities have lagged behind this transformation. Work experiences for students must not stop while physical distancing is in place; instead, these opportunities must move online as so much other work has done.
  - **Encouraging employers to hire students.** Employers are an integral part of the WIL opportunity. A marketing campaign to encourage employers to take on students will heighten awareness of the need for more employer sponsors.
• **Track and report on key performance results** such as job placements, increased wages, retention of international students, and link this to the South Island Prosperity Partnership’s Economic Recovery Dashboard\(^\text{10}\).

Recommendation B: The federal and provincial governments and the education sector must work together to facilitate the return of Canadian and international students to British Columbia. To accelerate this process, the Committee recommends:

• **Develop a Safe Student Corridor.** To expedite a safe return, students will need a seamless travel plan with clear and consistent procedures. A Safe Student Corridor would include assistance on quarantine plans, international travel documentation and accommodation.

• **Develop clear and consistent messaging** to a) promote the South Island as a safe, welcoming environment for international students, and b) quell fears by local residents that international students pose a health risk. Messaging should include information about the Safe Student Corridor and the positive economic and social impact of international students.

• **Refresh and expand Greater Victoria’s brand into a regional networked brand portfolio.** As B.C. gains a positive reputation for its management pandemic from a public health, safety and governance perspective, there is an emerging opportunity to position Greater Victoria favourably within a new global context in which mid-sized city-regions around the world compete based on health, safety, governance, culture, quality of life and economic vibrancy. The committee recommends SIPP and its partners coordinate a networked marketing portfolio and messaging campaign around why Greater Victoria is a desirable place to study, live, work, start a business and invest. The committee further recommends that a collaborative brand family portfolio and creative campaign be developed with key partners to help refresh the brand as a thriving, globally-fluent and diverse city region. The provincial government should create similar messaging that would work for CreativeBC, Destination BC, Trade+Invest BC, InnovateBC and other channels.

Recommendation C: Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs) and employers must develop a South Island Upskill Micro-Credential Framework and Program to support upskilling and reskilling in an era of accelerating change. This will equip people with critical skills (clean, digital, health) and help them retool and retrain in the economy’s transitional sectors. The Committee recommends that the provincial government invest $1-million — to be spent over three years — in a program that will:

• **Formalize a post-secondary micro-credential framework.** This framework will allow employers and employees greater access to upskilling training options for skills needed during the pandemic and post-pandemic economies. It will allow for customization and flexibility for learners by combining each participating institution’s unique assets and expertise. It will also leverage existing online courses and custom learning and/or contract training at Greater

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\(^{10}\) [https://southislandprosperity.ca/economic-recovery-dashboard/](https://southislandprosperity.ca/economic-recovery-dashboard/)
Victoria’s PSIs. New content would be developed based on results from the Future Skills Council’s efforts.

- **Emphasize high-level competencies and transferable skills** such as critical thinking, design, problem-solving, teamwork, change management, data analysis, leadership, intercultural competence and communication. These skills are validated by the private sector and BC’s *Labour Market Outlook* and should be validated and customized with industry through the Future Skills Council.

- **Develop a clear set of targets** such as the number of students/learned trained, employment rates, engagement with employers and link this to the South Island Prosperity Partnership’s Rising Economy Recovery Dashboard.\(^\text{11}\)

- **Work with Indigenous communities to co-develop an Indigenous Upskill Micro-Credential Program** with a curriculum that draws on Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. Pilot the first micro-credential program on Indigenous management with the Songhees Nation.

- **Advocate for training grant support.** Funding could come from both the private and the public sectors. This program would provide clear information and advice to the provincial and federal governments on gaps and limitations within current funding programs.

- **Identify skills gaps for curriculum creation.** The program would work with all PSIs — and private-sector partners where applicable — to identify skills gaps and then co-create a curriculum, allowing learners to self-select and blend courses from participating institutions.

### Recommendation D: Accelerate Recovery through Innovation and Research

While COVID-19 has presented many challenges, we cannot ignore the incredible opportunities created out of the crisis. One such opportunity is the critical need for expertise and innovation and the significant role of research in responding to the pandemic.

There are tremendous opportunities to do things differently in a healthy, sustainable way. The South Island post-secondary ecosystem produces the talent, ideas and innovation to shape what our world looks like in the future. As part of our recovery and resilience, we need to create more effective and deliberate connections between highly qualified, talented people and business, industry and the non-profit sector to drive innovation and transformation.

The Committee recommends:

- **Secure funding to co-develop and partner on an Innovation Adoption Hub**, sometimes called the Innovation Precinct. The Precinct idea originates with the 2020 report “Putting Innovation to

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\(^{11}\) [https://southislandprosperity.ca/economic-recovery-dashboard/](https://southislandprosperity.ca/economic-recovery-dashboard/)
Work for British Columbia” by BC’s first Innovation Commissioner and would serve as a focal point for strong efforts already in play through Camosun Innovates and the Coast Capital Innovation Centre at the University of Victoria. This would allow the research agenda of all South Island post-secondary institutions to align for a more significant regional impact. Aligned research could support targeted commercial growth around an ocean and marine cluster.

- **Support the Ocean and Marine Innovation Hub through industry partnerships, workforce education and research excellence.** Located in Greater Victoria, this innovation hub can nurture a globally competitive West Coast Oceans Cluster. Emerging opportunities include:
  
  o development of new technologies, products and services associated with measuring and dealing with the effects of climate change adaptation and mitigation;
  
  o First Nations empowerment, leading to increased partnerships for marine monitoring and protection;
  
  o First Nations groups supporting environmental protection initiatives and being key funders of marine research;
  
  o Indigenous-led cultural tourism;
  
  o development of technologies related to marine ecosystem remediation projects, including plastics and microplastics;
  
  o major oil and gas clients pursuing opportunities in offshore wind and wave energy, creating an increased demand for ocean science and technology products and services;
  
  o new technologies, such as rapid prototyping, 3D printing, 3D modeling, Virtual Reality (VR) simulation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) being adopted by the industry;¹³
  
  o joint-venture partnerships, both government-to-government and government-to-business.

- **Call on all levels of government** to make targeted investments to increase research collaboration and outputs in critical areas such as climate/sustainability, Indigenous reconciliation, ocean and marine science and technology, including development and commercialization. This is the path to a sustainable, resilient economy.

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13 As a result of the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS), the industry has digitalized to keep pace with the global market. Organizations have widely adopted new technology to improve design and prototyping processes. AI capabilities are being integrated into products.
3. BACKGROUND

Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;
- identify opportunities for the region that align with federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;
- provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing and responsive to the evolving situation;
- help coordinate recovery activities for the region by assisting stakeholders in identifying common interests and developing partnerships;
- ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is segmented into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

- Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).
- Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.
- Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan.
- Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Education and Skills Development Committee

The Education and Skills Development Committee is composed to represent the post-secondary and continuing education sectors in the South Island region.
Committee Members

- Jennifer Vornbrock (Co-Chair), Community & Government Relations, University of Victoria
- Emilie de Rosenroll (Co-Chair), CEO, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Geoff Wilmhurst, Vice President of Partnerships, Camosun College
- Richard Gale, Director, Camosun Innovates, Camosun College
- Pedro Márquez, Vice President of Research, International, Marketing & Business Development, Royal Roads University
- Jo-Ann Clarke, Dean, Continuing Studies, University of Victoria
- Paula Jamieson, President and CEO, Global Village Victoria
- Zoe Macleod, Director of Professional and Continuing Studies, Royal Roads University

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Education and Skills Development Committee was struck in June following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met seven times from June through August. The committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey, conducted scenario-planning and administered the survey from a targeted group of respondents throughout the South Island region. The committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used these to frame a SWOT/future-casting meeting. The last three meetings focused on the identification of key themes, ideas and recommendations actions for insertion into this report. The Committee will continue to meet to support ongoing collaboration and implementation.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Inclusive Economy Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The Inclusive Economy Committee convened to contribute to the inclusivity of the region’s economic recovery relating to the social sector and particularly impacted communities. The social sector is a significant contributor to the region’s economy. Total economic activity of registered charitable organizations in the Capital Region is just over $4-billion.\(^\text{14}\) This spending supports the equivalent of 63,000 jobs and $300-million in municipal taxes.

In considering who an inclusive economic recovery would include, the Committee identified the need to consider inclusion beyond the social sector to communities facing inequity before the pandemic and those particularly impacted by COVID-19. This includes women, Indigenous peoples, racial minorities, newcomers (including immigrants and refugees), youth, low-income and precariously employed individuals, persons with disabilities and persons employed in particularly impacted industries, including tourism, retail and hospitality.

Specifically, the Committee identified increased disparities and disproportionate impact on women\(^\text{15}\) and racial minorities. The pandemic has widened the gaps that have existed due to racial, gendered and other long-standing issues in hiring and employment practices. This is corroborated by data from Statistics Canada and the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC). Under pre-COVID-19 economic conditions, most visible minority groups were more likely to live in poverty.\(^\text{16}\) COVID-19 has generally had a stronger impact on visible minority participants’ ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs than for White participants, even after taking into account group differences in job loss, immigration status, pre-COVID employment status, education, and other demographic characteristics.\(^\text{17}\)

Women’s employment — which is dominant in the sectors hardest hit by the recession — has been slower to rebound. Despite absorbing 51% of job losses in March and April, women accounted for only 45% of job gains in May and June as economic activity restarted. Nearly half of newly unemployed women who lost their jobs between February and May (and one third who lost jobs between February and June) were terminated and did not seek work. This put them at higher risk of long-term job-separation and future wage penalties.\(^\text{18}\) The pandemic has disproportionately impacted women-


\(^{15}\) A July 2020 study from RBC found the pandemic has pushed women’s participation in the labour force to its lowest level in three decades, with 1.5-million women losing their jobs in the first two months of the recession.


identified parents, particularly single mothers with younger children\textsuperscript{19}. An inclusive economic recovery will require a focus on accessible child care and better support to parents.

Many challenges faced by the social sector before COVID-19 were exacerbated by the pandemic and the related response. Lack of core funding\textsuperscript{20} made responding to increased demand for programs and services in alignment with provincial health orders very difficult. Specific issues include:

- **Over-extended capacity within the sector.**\textsuperscript{21} “Before the pandemic, at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre VNFC, we were struggling with extended capacity and ‘overask’ for our staff and membership. With COVID-19, there is an increased expectation for us to respond to research and policy recommendations. This is neither equitable nor sustainable for our staff who are, in many ways, over-extended in capacity due to the pandemic.” — Ron Rice, Executive Director, VNFC

- **Limited core funding and lack of access to new funding.** “There is an obvious need for increased capacity and expanded program delivery in line with social distancing and health ramifications to effectively support new programs or expansions to existing ones in the light of the pandemic. However, available funding, so far, does not support staff overtime or any form of sustainable changes to the structure and nature of programs delivered. Accessibility remains a big issue for many newcomers who would benefit greatly from face-to-face or direct program delivery.” — Jean McRae, CEO, Inter-Cultural Association

- **Most sector funding is distributed on a per-project basis,** severely limiting the amount of unrestricted core funding available. This comes with burdensome — often uncompensated — reporting requirements, leaving many organizations with limited resources to respond to additional costs associated with modified service delivery, technology acquisition and training.

- **Demand for programs and services has increased dramatically.** The Mustard Seed food distribution centre has reported a 100% increase in demand for food support, and Rainbow Kitchen has seen hot meals increase to 13,000 per month — 1,000 more meals than served during the Christmas rush period.

- **No guarantee of future funding despite increased demand.** Unlike other sectors, increases in demand do not guarantee increases in revenue. This makes it difficult for organizations to plan beyond the short term and take the necessary steps to re-tool for post-COVID service delivery. Fear of funding cuts further clouds the planning process.


\textsuperscript{20} This includes funding distributed to clients or other donees.

\textsuperscript{21} According to the “No Immunity” report evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on B.C.’s social sector, 78% of respondents indicated a disruption of services to clients and communities. Respondents serving women (100%) and people with disabilities are experiencing the greatest disruption (93%), followed by families (88%) and youth (84%).
• **Increased challenges for organizations to provide vital services to clients who are not able to access digital delivery** due to limited access to technology, internet or data and low digital literacy and other learning barriers and the need for additional support to overcome these barriers.\(^\text{22}\) Additionally, online delivery is not always possible in some areas, including childcare, some forms of training and direct assistance with living activities. In some cases, reduced capacity requirements due to provincial health orders have made program delivery uneconomical in the long term.

Fortunately, the region has many opportunities to build back in a way that addresses these challenges. The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation A: All funding partners must continue COVID-19 financial supports and implement new ones to support sector and regional resilience.** Continuation and expansion of financial supports for the social sector and particularly impacted communities will help bridge the gap to a “new normal” funding and work environment.

The Committee recommends the following actions be implemented in partnership with the social sector to ensure the best deployment of resources:

* **Assure mid-management employment and core funding to not-for-profit and community organizations** to allow continuity of services, especially during the pandemic. Guaranteeing longer-term funding reduces uncertainty and increases the capacity to adapt to working effectively in relief and resilience phases.

* **Expand cash supports** in the form of unrestricted grants, capital and wage subsidies above current program offerings. Particular focus must be placed on operational support to allow organizations to invest in new service delivery, new methods of supporting clients and long-term sustainability prospects for skills development. Training, tools and financial and human resources are needed to deliver operational changes required for continued service.

* **Provide wage support for newcomers and particularly impacted groups** to support employers within the sector to employ diverse talents. As employment needs for particularly impacted groups vary, provide the necessary support in the workplace to help employees work effectively based on specific needs and accessibility requirements.

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\(^{22}\) According to the Statistics Canada report “The vulnerability of Canadians with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic” nearly one in five persons with disabilities do not use the internet and nearly half receive help with daily tasks. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200706/dq200706a-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200706/dq200706a-eng.htm)
- **Expand access to best practices in equitable employment practices** by social sector organizations to ensure the best talent is hired and supported as new employment possibilities emerge. This could take the form of free or subsidized access to skill-building workshops focused on HR, accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

- **Where possible, avoid traditional debt funding.** Debt is not a suitable relief product for most social sector organizations. If necessary, expand and create no-cost, patient options like the Canadian Emergency Bank Account (CEBA).

**Recommendation B: All partners must expand initiatives that return people to work.**

Half of all B.C.’s job losses from COVID-19 fell to employees making less than $17 per hour and who had little or no accumulated savings. These workers are disproportionately women, racialized and Indigenous workers, and recent immigrants. By contrast, 4% of B.C.’s total job losses were for those earning over $29 per hour.

Beyond the temporary wage and support initiatives in place, it is imperative to initiate effective measures to re-open service industries to allow employees in impacted industries to return to work safely and quickly. Actions with the quickest impact on lower wage-earning roles deserve specific attention.

The Inclusive Economy Committee recommends:

- **Expand opportunities to operate outside the usual permitted spaces.** Allow businesses and social sector organizations to operate outside of their usual locations and to expand to public or vacant spaces, including sidewalks, vacant stores and parks to support re-opening and re-hiring employees more quickly. Model initiatives like the City of Victoria’s Build Back Better program should be expanded and adopted more widely.

- **Expand Buy Local initiatives.** In alignment with several other committees, the Inclusive Economy Committee strongly supports community initiatives that support local buying, eating and shopping. These initiatives should incorporate best practices to ensure businesses owned by people from particularly impacted communities are fully included.

- **Expand the adoption of Social Procurement Initiatives (SPIs) by local governments** to ensure a more inclusive, resilient future economy. SPIs help to identify and mobilize the procurement process to meet inclusive and local economy goals. A local example is the Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative, which provides training, resources and support to help local governments implement social procurement effectively. Industries and governments are

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23 According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.  
26 [https://ccspi.ca/](https://ccspi.ca/)
encouraged to establish SPIs as a tangible means of delivering positive social outcomes. The committee recommends region-wide participation in this initiative.

- **Expand infrastructure development containing Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs).** CBAs are a form of social procurement that create more jobs and opportunities for historically disadvantaged communities and equity-seeking groups, including local, diverse-owned businesses and social enterprises. Ensure CBAs are developed in partnership with the communities with whom they aim to engage.

- **Provide targeted support for particularly impacted groups, including Indigenous and racialized women and people with disabilities.** As employers begin to recruit, new opportunities may disproportionately exclude racialized people, women, and people with disabilities. Funding should take upskilling support and capacity development training into account; there should be buffers for skills shortfalls for virtual service delivery and new technological prospects.

**Recommendation C: Coordinate a cross-sector effort to expand upskilling opportunities.** Engaging the education sector, all government levels, the social sector, and regional employers to expand upskilling and micro-credentialing could help social-sector staff navigate current challenges and assist low-wage and precarious workers in transitioning into better-paying jobs. An effective, inclusive upskilling effort could provide employers with much-needed staff in industries threatened by reduced immigration and retirements. The Inclusive Economy Committee recommends:

- **Create a subsidy for local employers** to train new low-skilled hires. Existing wage subsidy programs provide support to the employer for hiring low skilled workers; however, the training burden for the roles often requires significant investment from existing qualified staff that is more costly than the subsidy provided. Training support programs and funding need to be expanded to provide a positive incentive for employers to invest time and staff resources and help address the cost impact of hiring lower-skilled employees.

- **Enhance existing skills programs** with a focus on teaching the most-needed skills for industry. Market these programs toward sectors seeing the most extensive changes due to the pandemic. A skills inventory needs to be developed that is matched to industry needs and expands on existing work already initiated by WorkBC. New focus areas should include environmental skills training, digital literacy, remote learning and training.

- **Expand leadership training** to support social sector capabilities. For example, as the delivery model for service delivery rapidly changes in the post-COVID-19 economy, social sector staff must have access to effective training programs to lead their organizations. Skills development in e-marketing, digital literacy, human resources and remote communications skills are key areas of training and learning.

- **Expand learning supports** for people with barriers to participation, including people with lower or different literacy levels, newcomers and people with disabilities.
Recommendation D: Funding partners must provide additional resources to leverage online upskilling opportunities.

Many in-person upskilling programs were heavily subscribed before the pandemic, and this situation has now only become worse since COVID-19 started. Simultaneously, several existing online opportunities have been undersubscribed and could be further promoted to help fill the shortage.

To support effective access to upskilling and micro-credentialing opportunities, the Inclusive Economy Committee recommends:

- **Provide greater digital access to online learning.** Access to these courses requires computers and digital connectivity. Expansion of these facilities needs to be a key priority to enable all citizens to gain the necessary digital skills.

- **Create a concierge service** to help regional business leaders find relevant upskilling programs for their workers.

- **Expand support to migrate services online** to assist social sector organizations.

- **Promote no-cost opportunities for upskilling,** e.g., the Greater Victoria Public Library’s offering of Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning) courses.

- **Promote the value of micro-credentialing and other upskilling programs to employers** to increase awareness and acceptance of credentials.

Recommendation E: In partnership with the social sector and particularly impacted communities, establish a cross-sector, region-wide approach to economic inclusion

An inclusive recovery for the region will require the consistent implementation and measurement of new and adapted practices across sectors. To support this, the Inclusive Economy Committee recommends:

- **Establish baseline vulnerability and resilience indicators to monitor ongoing progress,** including disaggregated and regionally focused data. Support and connect with existing social sector initiatives engaging the sector and particularly impacted communities. Potential local initiatives include Community Social Planning Council’s Recovery Agenda: from Vulnerability to Resilience project and the Regional Outcomes Monitoring Collaborative. Encourage cross-sector partnerships to generate and share data.

- **Provide regular reporting on the above indicators** for measurement and impact monitoring. Develop KPIs with relevant stakeholders to measure the direction and track systemic changes.

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27 [https://www.lynda.com/](https://www.lynda.com/)
over long periods. KPIs should include specific outcome metrics that enable easy communication of impact to funders, partners and stakeholders within particularly impacted groups.

- **Resource the participation of social sector organizations and persons from particularly impacted communities** to enable full participation in the co-creation of approaches to inclusion.

- **Support the sharing and implementation of best practices across sectors through a roundtable or similar mechanism** to reduce redundancy and support timely and effective incorporation of inclusion approaches.

- **Substantially address racism, discrimination and other forms of bias across sectors**, particularly in industries with historic underrepresentation of women, visible minorities, newcomers, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

### 3. BACKGROUND

#### Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial, municipal stimulus policies and funding;

- give confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

- help coordinate recovery activities for the region by assisting stakeholders in identifying common interests and developing partnerships;

- ensure that the plan informs — and is informed — by broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

#### Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector has unique circumstances, which is why the Taskforce is segmented into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

- Opportunities identification and situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).
- Provide recommendations to the Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.

- Recommendations will include identifying ideas, policies and actions as well goals, measures, and potential owners of these actions. These recommendations will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan.

- The Committees will begin by focusing recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivot to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

**Inclusive Economy Committee**

The Inclusive Economy Committee represents the social sector, including not-for-profits, community organizations and social enterprises, and individuals particularly impacted in communities in the South Island region. While many issues and opportunities are unique to this community, all other committees’ issues are also felt within the Inclusive Economic Committee.

**Committee Members**

The Inclusive Economy Committee was selected for its experience, diversity, breadth of knowledge, understanding of sector and community leadership. It was made up of the following members:

- Ruth Mojeed (Co-Chair), Founder and CEO, The Inclusion Project
- Jacques van Campen (Co-Chair), Director of Innovation, South Island Prosperity Partnership,
- Elysia Glover, Executive Director, Community Micro Lending
- Maureen Sawa, CEO, Greater Victoria Public Library
- Mark Breslauer, CEO, United Way of Greater Victoria
- Tina Fang, Chair, Canadian Migration Institute
- Darlene Gallant, President, Victoria Labour Council
- Diana Gibson, CEO, Community Social Planning Council
- Jean McCrae, Executive Director, Inter-Cultural Association
- Kristi Fairholm-Mader, Co-Founding Director, Scale Collaborative
- Ron Rice (Advisor), Executive Director, Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Carol Anne Hilton (Advisor), CEO, Indigenomics Institute
Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Inclusive Economy Committee was struck on May 27 and met four times over the following two months. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to key community and sector respondents. The Committee also reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used future-casting workshops to identify the recommendations, ideas and actions highlighted in this document.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Indigenous Economy Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The Indigenous economy has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic due to pre-COVID-19 challenges endemic within this sector and a high reliance on tourism to drive Indigenous economic prosperity. Destination BC reported in 2016 that approximately 401 Indigenous tourism-related businesses were operating in B.C., generating $705-million in direct gross domestic output and creating 7,400 full-time jobs. Additionally, this sector grew substantially above the average tourist growth rate (17.3% over the past three years). However, as with most tourism-related businesses, the Committee has found a nearly 100% drop in Indigenous tourism and Indigenous art sales through the early stages of the pandemic and a continuing slow recovery in the short term.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for the Indigenous economy — its workers, businesses and members — to diversify and increase resilience. To achieve this, challenges associated with infrastructure, upskilling, administration, promotion, resourcing and funding must be met with:

- a continued focus on leveraging the unique arts and culture of Indigenous communities;
- a plan to better integrate Indigenous businesses and the young and growing workforce\(^{28}\) into the broader economy; and
- increased sharing of best practices among Indigenous communities and businesses. For example, the Songhees, Esquimalt and Malahat First Nations and the Native Friendship Centre have successfully developed and promoted hiring programs from within their own communities. This has created an incredibly successful and valuable pipeline of talent for other sectors and governments operating in the region.

The Committee sees economic development as a path to improving the lives of First Nations members. Issues identified in this report will provide for greater economic self-reliance, and in turn, help to address many social challenges. This Committee’s recommendations align with the recommendations from the other taskforce committees to ensure that the Indigenous economy is holistically included in regional planning.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also in building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

\(^{28}\) [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm)
2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A: All partners must further incorporate the Indigenous economy into the regional economy.

The separation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous regional economies results in substantial inefficiencies and an overall lack of inclusivity. To ensure we all have access to — and can build from — each other’s unique strengths, Indigenous businesses must be included in the same economic planning, government funding models and business visibility and accessibility afforded to non-indigenous businesses. For any programs to be successful, this inclusion must be done with Indigenous guidance, direction, and support, as the Indigenous cultural values and mores must be understood by everyone for any successful programs.

The Indigenous Economy Committee recommends:

- **Fund a led-by and made-for regional Indigenous economic development (ED) office** to help curate regional economic opportunities mentioned further in this report. The office would augment and amplify economic activities taken at an individual Nation level and is not intended to supplant existing ED activities that already exist in some Nations. It would provide additional resources to these Nations, while also providing basic level services to the smaller Nations that cannot currently support these services. An example of the need for this office was recently felt when a large capital project for the South Island region was proposed. The project owner wished to include regionally relevant Indigenous input in the project but could not find an appropriate agency to help. Ultimately, the result was far lower economic value flowing to the First Nations through the project and beyond.

- **Ensure effective Indigenous input on procurement.** Currently, many procurement opportunities — public and private — are designed with outcomes for Indigenous communities in mind. For example, a set percentage of all labour or materials to be sourced by Indigenous-run businesses. However, without direct, local input from Indigenous economic agencies, the resulting formulas are often very short term and transactional. A longer view approach would identify strategic local focus areas in advance of project tendering (e.g., youth employment or skills development that can transfer to future projects). This early input in the procurement process would help maximize the long-term sustainable value of the projects to the Indigenous communities.

- **Develop an Indigenous business directory.** The directory would be a clear, efficient means for non-Indigenous businesses and individuals to connect with Indigenous businesses, opportunities and skills. The directory would be created and managed by the First Nations and be relevant to non-Indigenous ways of conducting business, up-to-date, accurate and easy to use.

- **Design and launch an Indigenous centralized employment agency.** The committee identified that many local organizations (government and private sector) are very interested in hiring Indigenous workers. However, lack of a clear place to go to attract this talent is slowing the
process and further removing a key under-employed community from the general workforce. An agency would be established to:

- work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment agencies and HR departments to share working opportunities and publish them through a digital job board;
- connect with local schools to fill work experience opportunities;
- connect with Indigenous communities to ensure effective visibility is given to the posting;
- provide input to educational institutions to help develop programs and curriculum in areas of greatest need.

This agency could potentially be housed within the Native Friendship Centre(s) where many employment services are already delivered for regional Indigenous members. It could leverage existing digital job boards, such as VIATEC’s job board for the technology community and could be funded, in part, by prospective employers paying a fee to post positions.

- **Create cultural awareness among non-Indigenous businesses.** The committee identified that many Indigenous workers have a difficult time integrating successfully into non-Indigenous businesses. This can be attributed, in some measure, to a lack of knowledge of Indigenous cultural values and their potential impact on business needs. For example, service to Elders and cultural responsibilities are very high priorities. This can sometimes result in work reliability challenges and, ultimately, work performance concerns. However, with proper planning and awareness, these events can be better accounted for and result in a stronger work relationship.

- **Support non-Indigenous businesses who want to incorporate Reconciliation into their work practices through awareness.** Businesses have begun asking how best to do this — and tools need to be delivered to support this journey. Further guidance can be found on the website of the Indigenous-owned digital company Animikii.

**Recommendation B: All partners must work together to build infrastructure and business development initiatives.**

All businesses need the same conditions, inputs and physical infrastructure to attract investment and thrive in a changing economy. Within the context of First Nations governance, the First Nations Fiscal Management Act provides the means to access pooled borrowing and use property tax dollars for infrastructure financing for very long-term borrowing in the same way that local governments do. The Indigenous Economy Committee recommends the following:

- **Encourage Indigenous businesses to improve their e-commerce capacity.** In alignment with the Retail, Services and Restaurants Committee Report, this committee agrees small businesses need grants, resources and training to scale up digital infrastructure, boost digital capacity to work remotely and build marketing skills to benefit from the expanded customer base that e-
commerce offers. These services need to be provided at low or no cost to encourage participation and deployment.

- **Recognize Indigenous leadership roles in new and existing initiatives.** More Indigenous control over the processes in provincial and federal programs such as WorkBC would help ensure funds are flowing to the priorities established by the First Nations for themselves.

- **Support local delivery of specialized Indigenous financial training programs.** With increased infrastructure and business development efforts, it is critical to ensure local business development skills are available to support and lead this work effectively. The committee recommends the local delivery of courses targeting mid-management Indigenous economic skills development such as The Tulo Centre for Indigenous Economics at Thompson Rivers University, or the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association certification of financial officers to support and lead this work effectively.

**Recommendation C: All partners must work together to promote Indigenous businesses.**

Demand for Indigenous products and services has been severely impacted by the loss of customers and tourists during the pandemic. While Indigenous businesses require unique adaptations, many of the solutions below work hand-in-hand within the complete regional economic context. The Indigenous Economy Committee recommends the following:

- **Include Indigenous businesses in shop-local initiatives.** In alignment with several other Taskforce Committee reports, the Indigenous Economy Committee supports shop/buy/sell local initiatives. The committee further recommends that the Indigenous economy needs to be visible and well-integrated in each of the initiatives, such as ShopLocalYYJ or the Island Good campaign.

- **Develop and fund a marketing campaign for Indigenous businesses and tourism.** This could include videos, promotional materials and an online gallery of photos of goods, services and experiences for inclusion in regional and provincial marketing campaigns and local media outlets.

- **Enhance collaboration among Indigenous communities.** Opportunities for Indigenous communities and businesses to share best practices and strategies will encourage growth. Examples could include building on the Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative and continuing forums for inter-community collaboration, such as economic forums.

**Recommendation D: All partners must work together to provide opportunities for upskilling.**

There is an acute need for upskilling throughout most areas of the Indigenous economy. Pre-COVID, the underemployment level within Indigenous communities was substantially higher than the broader region, even at record-low unemployment. In 2018, B.C.’s Indigenous unemployment rate was 10.2% vs. 4.5% for the non-Indigenous population. Upskilling will provide more family-supporting jobs and wages and carry positive social benefits throughout the community.
Within this broader situation, the Committee has identified a shortage of skilled workers at the mid-management level in First Nation and Indigenous organizations. Participants commented that internal promotion and skills development builds overall capacity and meets the objective of meaningful employment in household sustaining job developments. To create a specific Indigenous leadership program tailored to the development of future Indigenous administration and business leadership, the Indigenous Economic Committee recommends the following:

- **Partner with the companies and government offices that would benefit from First Nation trained staff.** These organizations could provide funding for training and mentorship to new First Nations employees with the understanding that well trained future employees may be the result. The First Nation offices would benefit from funding to support the training and coaching obligations they incur whenever they take on new administrative staff.

- **Develop a regional skills-needs inventory to help identify and close Indigenous skills gaps.** Many local businesses have employee skills requirements that are not visible to the First Nations. A collection of key employment skills opportunities needs to be developed and then viewed through the existing Indigenous population talent pool. The gaps identified will serve as key focus areas for micro-credentialing efforts.

- **Collaborate with training institutions on micro-credentialing.** In alignment with the Education and Training Committee recommendations, this committee sees great benefit in developing micro-credential programs to help build the skills identified from the skills-needs inventory assessment. These programs need to be designed and delivered with and by existing Indigenous leadership to ensure authenticity and situational relevance.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

- give confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

- help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;
● ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector experiences unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is divided into 11 sector-driven Committees. These Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce’s work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

● Identify opportunities and conducting a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience);

● Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive;

● Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan;

● Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Indigenous Economy Committee

The Indigenous Economy Committee serves to represent the First Nations of the South Island region along with the many Indigenous citizens living outside of the Nations. Within this set of communities exists a broad, vibrant and diversified group of businesses and cultural enterprises along well as government and administrative organizations.

While many issues and opportunities are unique to this community, the issues identified by most or all other committees are also felt within the Indigenous economy. To that end, all of the other Committee reports have a bearing on the Indigenous Economic Committee report and vice versa.

Committee Members

The Indigenous Economy Committee was selected for its experience, diversity, breadth, understanding of the sector and community leadership. It is made up of the following members:

● Christina Clarke (Co-Chair) CEO, Songhees Nation DevCo
● Jacques van Campen (Co-Chair), Director of Innovation, South Island Prosperity Partnership
● Josh Handysides, CAO, Malahat Nation
Additionally, all Chiefs of the local Nations were invited to attend and comment on the work of the committee throughout its many sessions. Many people, including Chief Ron Sam (Songhees), Chief Russ Chipps (Scia’new) and Chief Rebecca David (Pauquachin), gave direct feedback and direction to help assist and guide the discussions.

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Indigenous Economy Committee was struck on May 28 and met four times over the following two months. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to key community and industry respondents. The Committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used future-casting workshops to identify the recommendations, ideas and actions highlighted in this document.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Oceans and Marine Committee Report

1. ISSUE

Excluding tourism, the Ocean and Marine sector employs approximately 13,000 people in Greater Victoria and is a significant component of B.C.’s manufacturing sector, which contributes $15-billion to the provincial economy. Given the sector’s varied makeup, it has had a varied response to the pandemic:

- Government spending on shipbuilding has continued, but there are challenges retaining employees and keeping them safe.
- Research, including data and technology, has revealed some reduction in demand and predicts a very slow recovery.
- Defence has seen little change, but the sector is also having to contend with staffing and safety issues.
- Fisheries and aquaculture have seen a greater demand in some segments but a reduction in others.
- Marine tourism has been very negatively affected.
- Recreational boating has seen an increase as more people with the means to do so have invested in boat ownership as an alternative to international travel.

This report highlights the need to support certain segments of this sector to ensure viability in the short term and growth in the long term. The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable, and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A: The BC Government must act to support marine tourism.

Marine tourism businesses are barely operating or not operating at all. To ensure this segment of Greater Victoria’s economy survives COVID-19, financial and regulatory measures must be put in place through 2021 so that these organizations remain solvent long enough to rebuild when the province fully re-opens in Phase Four.

The Ocean and Marine Committee recommends the following:

**Fulfill the stimulus package**\(^{30}\) **request from the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC).** A $680-million request was made by TIABC to the Province on July 21, 2020, to help keep the tourism industry solvent in the coming months and years.

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\(^{30}\) [https://www.tiabc.ca/advocacy-policy-development/covid-19-updates/](https://www.tiabc.ca/advocacy-policy-development/covid-19-updates/)
• **Assess B.C.’s competitive landscape.** As a medium-term recovery tactic, the B.C. government — through partnerships with Business Council of British Columbia, Invest in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada and others — should invest in robust monitoring and public reporting of tax rates, regulatory burdens, trade barriers (both interprovincial and international) and the inflation rate relative to nearby competitors (neighbouring provinces and states). This will inform how our province can remain strategically relevant in a post-pandemic economic recession and recovery.

**Recommendation B: The BC Government and industry must work together to address labour challenges through training and apprenticeships.**

Labour supply is a pre-existing challenge that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. The Association of British Columbia Marine Industries (ABCMI) has published a sectoral labour market study through the Sector Labour Market Partnership Program. This report highlights B.C.’s industrial marine sector’s labour needs and includes long-range estimates on changes to the workforce through retirements, attrition and sector growth,\(^{31}\) as well as estimates of the skill sets needed to ensure the marine sector remains competitive for years to come.

There is an opportunity to encourage students to pursue marine careers and align reskilling initiatives with current demands in these sector. This would ensure an education plan that grows, sustains and trains a highly skilled workforce that drives the increased global competitiveness of the sector.

The Ocean and Marine Committee recommends the following:

• **Create a work placement program (Work Integrated Learning) for the ocean and marine sector.** Work integrated Learning (WIL) seeks to integrate a student’s academic training with the workplace or other practical or professional experience. It involves an academic institution, a “host” organization and the student. WIL includes co-op placements and terms, internships, mandatory practical placement, and apprenticeship programs found in the skilled trades. The committee encourages the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to work with ABCMI and SIPP, and applicable post-secondary institutions and industry, to create a WIL work placement program for students seeking employment in the ocean and marine sector. The committee has determined that enterprises in the sector are prepared to step up their commitment to WIL by providing placements and work opportunities and collaborating with academic institutions and professional associations through an efficient, consistent process.

• **Commence a Sector Labour Market Partnership project on Seafarers.** In partnership with ABCMI, the Provincial government should fund and complete a Labour Market Study of Seafarers.

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\(^{31}\) ABCMI estimates 16,500 jobs to be filled between now and 2028.
- **Certify Seafarer as a trade through the Industry Training Authority.** This would provide a clear pathway from high school through apprenticeship to a full-time, well-paid career in the growing marine sector, and it would help off-set looming job losses in other sectors.

**Recommendation C: Local and Provincial governments and sector leaders must take this opportunity to better market all Greater Victoria has to offer.**

British Columbia is gaining a positive reputation for how it has managed — and continues to manage — the pandemic from the public health and safety perspective and governance perspective.

The Ocean and Marine Committee recommends the following:

- **Refresh and expand Greater Victoria’s brand into a regional networked brand portfolio** As B.C. gains a positive reputation for how it has managed the pandemic from a governance and public health and safety standpoint, there is an emerging opportunity to position Greater Victoria favourably within a new global context in which mid-sized city-regions around the world compete based on health, safety, governance, culture, quality of life and economic vibrancy. The Committee recommends that SIPP and its partners coordinate a networked marketing portfolio and messaging campaign around why Greater Victoria is a desirable place to study, live, work, start a business and invest. The Committee further recommends that a collaborative brand family portfolio and creative campaign be developed with key partners to help refresh the brand as a thriving, globally-fluent and diverse city region. The Provincial government should create similar messaging that would work for CreativeBC, Destination BC, Trade+Invest BC, InnovateBC and other channels.

**Recommendation D: The provincial and federal governments must invest in a competitive business environment through infrastructure and programs.**

Strategic investment and support will accelerate the growth of the Ocean and Marine sector at a time when the economy needs to build on its strengths to recover. Funding “shovel-ready” projects will provide stimulus funding and add to the strategic capabilities of the sector in British Columbia and on Canada’s West Coast. The Ocean and Marine Committee recommends the following:

- **Accelerate investment in the Esquimalt Graving Dock (EGD).** This facility is owned and operated by the federal government (Public Services and Procurement Canada) and is in the process of an extended upgrading. This includes lengthening the graving dock. These projects are designed, costed and approved for implementation. Some could be brought forward in their implementation schedule to achieve a strategic increase in the EGD’s capacity to support the sector. Stakeholder engagement is the next step and could begin immediately. These projects will create jobs and increase business confidence, leading to investment in this sector’s supply and service chains.
• **Support an Ocean and Marine Innovation Hub.** Located in Greater Victoria, this innovation hub can nurture a globally competitive West Coast Oceans Cluster. Emerging opportunities include:
  
  o development of new technologies, products and services associated with measuring and dealing with the effects of climate change adaptation and mitigation;
  
  o First Nations empowerment, leading to increased partnerships for marine monitoring and protection;
  
  o First Nations groups supporting environmental protection initiatives and being key funders of marine research;
  
  o Indigenous-led cultural tourism;
  
  o development of technologies related to marine ecosystem remediation projects, including plastics and microplastics;
  
  o major oil and gas clients pursuing opportunities in offshore wind and wave energy creating an increased demand for ocean science and technology products and services;
  
  o new technologies, such as rapid prototyping, 3D printing, 3D modeling, Virtual Reality (VR) simulation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) being adopted by the industry;\(^{32}\);
  
  o joint-venture partnerships, both government-to-government and government-to-business.

• **Modeled after eastern Canada, create an equivalent program to support Western Canada’s ocean and marine economy.** The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)’s Business Development Program (non-commercial) provides significant funding to non-profit organizations to help deliver on Federal Government objectives for economic growth, increased exports, and innovative and technological advancements. This program provides recurring funding, for example, to the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association (ACADA) of $3 million annually (over three years) to support marine companies in that region. However, ACOA’s sister-agency for western Canada (Western Economic Diversification Canada) does not have a comparable program that could be accessed by ACADA’s western equivalent, the Association of BC Marine Industries (ABCMI). Providing this program on Canada’s east coast without providing it on the west coast creates a competitive disadvantage for the Western Canadian ocean and marine economy. The Committee recommends that the Federal Government create an equivalent program administered through WD for western Canada.

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\(^{32}\) As a result of the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS), the industry has digitalized to keep pace with the global market. Organizations have widely adopted new technology to improve design and prototyping processes. AI capabilities are being integrated into products.
• **Increase partnership in the South Island Transportation Plan (SITP).** This committee supports the recommendation by the Transportation Committee and suggests the SITP include marine assets (for example, the Mill Bay Ferry and the Royal Bay connector to Victoria) to account for the growing demand for transportation of goods and people on the South Island. More travel by sea is inevitable as the population grows, and ocean travel should be a seamless part of the region’s multi-modal transportation offerings using digital and data-driven systems.

• **Create a regional Industrial Land Reserve.** Using the Capital Regional District as a pilot region for a provincial initiative, the reserve would protect employment lands (including marine-based and water-accessible lands) for industrial and employment purposes. Creating this land reserve would relieve zoning conflicts brought on by increased demand for housing over the long-term.

• **Support innovation and productivity.** Expand and increase funding for innovation development and procurement programs (i.e., IRAP, NSERC, ISC, IDEaS) and implement a supply arrangement (Maritime Advanced Supply of Innovation) to facilitate the call for — and funding of — innovative projects supported by the federal government.

• **Invest in a shore-power initiative**\(^33\) **for the cruise-ship industry.** Cleaner, quieter energy would help address the negative perception challenges of the cruise-ship industry and have positive environmental impacts. This recommendation hinges on the results of a current study underway by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA).

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

• create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

• identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to municipal, provincial and federal stimulus policies and funding;

• give confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing and responsive to the evolving situation;

• help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;

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\(^33\) This action depends on the outcome of a feasibility report currently underway by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.
• ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

**Sector Committee Objectives**

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. These Committees act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Their work includes:

• conduct an opportunities identification and situational analysis of their specific sectors for both short-term (recovery) and long-term (resilience) scenarios;

• provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive;

• make recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions;

• identify goals, measures and potential owners of these actions (to be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan);

• focus recommendations for recovery in the short- and mid-term (<6 months) then pivot to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

**Oceans and Marine Committee**

British Columbia is a major ocean and marine ecosystem with 29,000 kilometres of coastline, 6,500 islands and 450,000 square kilometres of internal and offshore waters. The Ocean and Marine Committee represents this diverse and promising sector.

In Greater Victoria, major employers in the marine space include Seaspan (Victoria Shipyards), 1,096 employees; CFB Esquimalt, whose economic impact is estimated at over $700-million per year (along with 4,411 military and 2,762 civilian personnel employees); the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), with a Western Region based primarily in Greater Victoria, employing approximately 1,300 personnel; BC Ferries, employing around 4,500 employees; Ralmax Group of Companies (Point Hope Maritime, Esquimalt Drydock, United Engineering); Babcock Canada, 279 employees; Ocean Networks Canada, 130-plus employees; and segments related to tourism\(^\text{34}\) and transportation.\(^\text{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) Tourism has a $2.3-billion economic impact and represents 22,000 jobs in the region, according to Destination Greater Victoria.

\(^{35}\) Eight thousand people are employed in transportation and warehousing in Greater Victoria, according to the Conference Board of Canada, 2020 Metropolitan Outlook, February 2020.)
Committee Members

The Committee members were selected for their experience, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. They are represented by:

- Craig Norris (Co-Chair), CEO, Victoria International Marina
- Dallas Gislason (Co-Chair), Director of Economic Development, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Alex Rueben, Executive Director, Association of BC Marine Industries (ABCMI)
- Dr. Kate Moran, President & CEO, Ocean Networks Canada
- Captain (N) Sam Sader, Base Commander, CFB Esquimalt
- Mike Walley, President, Babcock Canada
- Brook Castelsky, COO, Oak Bay Marine Group
- Sage Berryman, CEO, Ralmax Group of Companies
- Sonterra Ross, Manager, Business Development and Operations, Seaspan
- Lindsay Gaunt, Director, Cruise Development, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA).

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Oceans and Marine Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met three times from May through July. The committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to a targeted group of marine companies and organizations throughout the South Island region. The committee reviewed and analyzed the industry survey results and other relevant research and reports and used these to frame a SWOT/future-casting meeting. This last meeting focused on identifying key themes, ideas and recommendations for insertion into this report.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Real Estate, Development and Construction Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The real estate, development and construction sectors play an integral role in Greater Victoria’s economy — construction is one of the top employers, with 17,200 employees in 2018.\(^{36}\) Both sectors saw some slowing in mid-March when B.C. declared a state of emergency, though early indications show these sectors are on the mend. In fact, real estate and construction were deemed essential services, so transactions and construction projects could continue while accommodating new safety measures. As we move forward, there may be opportunities for construction investment to act as a catalyst for economic growth.

These sectors are important in terms of jobs and wealth creation, but they also contribute to economic well-being in many other areas:

- Residential real estate provides housing for families and is the greatest source of savings for many of the region’s residents.
- Commercial real estate creates jobs, along with spaces for retail, offices, and light industry.
- Institutional projects are necessary to support our community.
- Real estate business and investment provide a source of revenue for millions.
- Construction projects create jobs, as well as infrastructure and amenities that lead to a higher quality of life for the region’s residents.

More crucially, the real estate, development and construction sectors are a mirror for economic activity in the region: they respond to net migration and job growth through changes in the need for housing, retail, and commercial spaces. This mirror tells us that retail is suffering, which leads to economic challenges and safety issues as businesses remain partially or fully closed.

COVID-19 has also exacerbated existing housing shortages and further increased construction costs. The Real Estate, Development and Construction Committee has prepared this report to highlight the urgency surrounding the need for clear policies, streamlined processes and ease of engagement with municipal governments for both the sector and the community. By addressing issues at the forefront of these sectors, we also address key issues, including livability and affordability, that affect the entire community’s health and wellbeing.

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\(^{36}\) Metropolitan Outlook, 2020
The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable, and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

For Governments

RECOMMENDATION A: Local, regional and provincial governments must prioritize policies that increase housing and rental stock.

The housing shortage, in terms of ownership and rental, is a worsening issue in the Greater Victoria region. New policies must build from current and new community planning principles to increase housing availability and, at the same time, increase engagement among all housing partners. The Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee recommends the following:

- **Pursue regulatory efficiencies through digital platforms.** As a result of COVID-19, many communities successfully moved to online engagement and a virtual format for public hearings and committee meetings, including Community Association Land Use Committees. The Provincial government has a role in mandating the reforms that will be implemented at a local level. Giving people an option to attend in person, engage online, or submit in writing creates greater democratic involvement, increases public engagement and inclusion and increases transparency and efficiency. These digital practices should be continued after restrictions on gatherings and/or the state of emergency have been lifted.

- **Commit to an “open for business” mindset for new project work.** This mindset includes competitive municipal fee structures, reasonable application turnaround times and well-resourced planning departments. These initiatives increase development application fees and project volumes, which in turn bolster employment and enhance the property tax base. This enables municipalities to advance key strategic priorities regarding infrastructure, public space, affordable housing and more.

- **Standardize regulations and policies** across municipalities to improve efficiency for developers and builders. The Provincial government could play a role in setting housing targets for Municipal governments.

- **Improve collaboration on policy development among all government levels — federal, provincial, Capital Regional District (CRD) and municipal.** An industry working group should be formed to evaluate current and new policies/regulations for efficacy and to eliminate contradictions among policies. Policies created in siloed levels of government create layer upon layer of added costs. These costs are then passed onto the purchaser or renter, which increases the cost of housing.
• **Allow applicants for new developments to provide economic impact statements** as part of rezoning and/or development permit applications. This provides councils and community members with a better idea of the direct and indirect economic benefits to municipalities and the public associated with new development and construction (e.g., property tax lift, job creation, municipal fees).

• **Reduce the current housing approvals and qualifications systems bottleneck**, which has been created and worsened by the pandemic. For example:
  
  ○ Reduce the extent to which local governments prescribe the specifics of residential supply (e.g., unit size, tenure, affordability levels). Undue intervention can cause a housing supply mismatch and adversely impact the volume of supply and the overall affordability of housing.

  ○ Fast-track affordable housing and create incentives for projects by forgiving the Development Cost Charge (DCC) and the Community Amenity Contributions (CAC) for all development types.

  ○ Provide incentives for rental housing, such as lower application fees, fast track applications, tax holidays and lower DCCs.

  ○ Create a transparent, outcomes-driven triage system that allows for rapid approvals and qualifications in cases where projects meet the minimum standards assessment.

  ○ Do not require projects to go to a public hearing if they meet the Official Community Plan (OCP) requirements.

**RECOMMENDATION B: Local governments must preserve, expand and promote public spaces to increase community well being; and federal and provincial governments must support small business survival through targeted programs and benefits.**

Public spaces, including parks, downtown centres, and restaurants that everyone enjoys, should remain functional and beautiful while benefiting from new policies that increase public safety and the vitality of street-level businesses. It is vital to strengthen the connection between people and the places they share through placemaking and implementing multi-modal transportation options. Nurturing these infrastructure values will not only create a more appealing, safe, and healthy community for everyone, it will help the property businesses to return to full capacity.

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37 “More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.” [http://www.ppp.org](http://www.ppp.org)
The Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee recommends:

- **Track metrics on urban crime** (e.g., graffiti, theft and property damage) and then set measurable goals for accountability and improvement through policy changes, policing, and bylaw enforcement. Both the tracking and goals should be publicly available.

- **Support small businesses** by lowering commercial property taxes and extending the applicability period of the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) to reduce small business costs. Also, thoughtful tapering of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) will help businesses to find staff and avoid closure. Vibrant and safe public spaces need thriving businesses, not empty buildings.

- **Continue and increase tactical urbanism**\(^{38}\) **initiatives** (e.g., more permissive licensing for restaurants and wholesale pricing for liquor). Make permanent the temporarily expanded pedestrianization of streets, patios and parklets to accommodate the need for more space and seats. Doing so has a transformative impact on street vitality.

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**For All Partners**

**RECOMMENDATION C:** All partners in the trades sector must create and implement new strategies to enhance and diversify the workforce.

Technology, climate change, globalization and changing population demographics\(^ {39}\) profoundly affect our tradesworkers, their job descriptions and the number of tradesworkers available to meet increasing demand. In fact, these influences are likely to have a much longer-term impact on the real estate, development and construction industries in Greater Victoria than COVID-19.

Solutions in this area require public-private partnerships, identified as one of the top three opportunities in the Situational Analysis survey (see survey details). The Real Estate, Development and Construction Committee recommends the following:

- **Forecast the medium- to long-term implications** of changing population demographics, which might be the direct and indirect consequences of a) forced reduction in project capacity as a region, b) reduction in sustainable, well-paying trades careers and c) upward pressure on construction costs — all of which may in turn compromise projects.

- **Enhance and expand apprenticeship work experiences and pre-apprentice training by** creating a liaison role between schools and employers.

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\(^{39}\) Generally, more workers are retiring with fewer new workers to replace them, and fewer journeypersons are available to train new workers.
• **Investigate barriers to the net in-migration of skilled workers.** These barriers include unaffordable housing.

• **Fast-track housing supply of all varieties**, not only to match the increased need for affordable homes but for the well-paid jobs these projects create in the construction and industrial industries, as well as the indirect jobs created in the service industries.

• **Examine how the real estate industry may support strong inbound demand** for housing from workers moving to the region.

• **Increase diversity** in the trades by instituting non-discrimination and workplace harassment policies, equitable practices, and widespread educational initiatives. Examples of initiatives include:
  - The Construction Workforce Equity Project’s Builders Code, piloted in 2019 to ensure B.C.’s construction employers can more easily adopt and champion human-resources policies that guarantee the equal and fair treatment of women in B.C.’s industrial, commercial and institutional construction workforce.
  - Women in Construction, a grassroots organization of the Vancouver Island Construction Association, focuses on increasing female participation.
  - The Coastal Community Social Procurement Initiative supports local government social procurement through education, training, and coaching.

**For Industry**

**RECOMMENDATION D: Refresh and expand Greater Victoria’s brand into a regional networked brand portfolio.**

As B.C. gains a positive reputation for how it has managed the pandemic from a governance and public health and safety standpoint, an emerging opportunity exists to position Greater Victoria favourably within a new global context in which mid-sized city-regions around the world compete based on health, safety, governance, culture, quality of life and economic vibrancy.

The Committee recommends that SIPP and its partners coordinate a networked marketing portfolio and messaging campaign around why Greater Victoria is a desirable place to study, live, work, start a business and invest. The Committee further recommends that a collaborative brand family portfolio and creative campaign be developed with key partners to help refresh the brand as a thriving, globally-fluent

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40 [https://www.builderscode.ca/#opening](https://www.builderscode.ca/#opening)
42 [https://ccspi.ca/](https://ccspi.ca/)
and diverse city region. The Provincial government should create similar messaging that would work for CreativeBC, Destination BC, Trade+Invest BC, InnovateBC and other channels.

The Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee recommends the following:

- **Highlight private-sector initiatives that nurture local businesses** as encouragement for new businesses to move here. Examples include publicly championing locally owned businesses and developments that exemplify the region’s brand.

- **Create and promote incentive or profile boosting programs for landlords** who lease to local businesses.

- **Explore private-sector and/or SIPP-led opportunities for improving analytics** surrounding supply/demand mismatches in our built environment.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

- provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

- help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;

- ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

**Sector Committees Objectives**

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

- Identify opportunities and conducting a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience);
● Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive;

● Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan;

● Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

**Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee**

The Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee was selected to represent the breadth of knowledge and diversity of these sectors in the South Island region.

**Committee Members**

- Suzanne Bradbury (Co-Chair), CEO, Fort Properties
- Emilie de Rosenroll (Co-Chair), CEO, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Kathy Whitcher (Co-Chair), Executive Director, Urban Development Institute (UDI)
- Robert Jawl, Managing Director, Jawl Properties
- John Knappett, President, Knappett Construction
- Reed Kipp, CEO, Devon Properties
- Rory Kulmala, CEO, Vancouver Island Construction Association (VICA)
- Ed Geric, President & CEO, Mike Geric Construction
- My Phung, Principal/Appraiser, Phung Horwood
- David Corey, Executive Officer, Victoria Real Estate Board (VREB)
- Kaye Melliship, Executive Director, Greater Victoria Housing Society
- Tyler Dolan, Managing Director, Colliers International

**Summary of Process and Research Findings**

The Real Estate, Development & Construction Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met five times throughout June and July. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey from a targeted group of respondents throughout the South Island region.
The committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used these to frame a SWOT/future-casting meeting. The last two meetings focused on the identification of key themes, ideas, and recommendations actions for insertion into this report.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Retail, Services and Restaurants Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The retail, services and restaurant sectors employ 40,000 people in the Greater Victoria region and make up $6-billion of economic activity in the region, with retail alone accounting for $5.64-billion. According to Restaurants Canada, restaurant sales in B.C. declined by 49.7% in March, 81.9% in April and 78.7% in May over the same month in the previous year. Initial lay-offs exceeded 80%, but since Phase 3 of B.C.’s reopening plan, this is estimated to be a 60% reduction from pre-pandemic employment levels.

Retailers and service businesses such as spas, hair salons, etc. have also been hit hard, with several notable and high-profile bankruptcies already announced. We must help the sector adapt quickly to changing consumer habits. A report released by Retail Insider in August 2020 forecasts that the biggest impact on the retail sector is yet to come. The magazine predicts major bankruptcies across Canada’s retail sector in 2021. This will have a cascading effect in Greater Victoria as vacancies reduce demand for commercial building permits and thus future tax revenues for local municipalities — all in the context of increased bankruptcies, higher unemployment levels and increased rates of crime.

In our situational analysis surveys, our Committee found that these sectors are experiencing similar challenges: employees not returning to work, difficulty adapting to e-commerce and delivery, reduced foot traffic, decreased consumer confidence impacting sales and a reduction in total sales, despite increases in sales in some areas like local food, liquor, gardening and leisurewear.

This report has been prepared to highlight the above challenges and also at building a more diverse, sustainable, and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A: All levels of government must expand financial supports and regulatory reform.

Retail, service and restaurant businesses are operating in a severely reduced manner — or not operating at all. To ensure this segment of Greater Victoria’s economy survives COVID-19, financial measures and regulatory reform must be instituted so that businesses remain solvent through 2021 to rebuild and expand when the Province fully re-opens in Phase 4. The Retail, Services and Restaurant Committee recommends the following:

- Create a complementary program to the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF). The RRRF administered by the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is nearly fully subscribed. This funding shortage will mean a shortfall during a second wave of the pandemic and will not allow for re-hiring employees. A complementary program could fill the funding gaps and include interest-free loans with a forgivable portion.
- **Build on the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).** CERB was essential support during the necessary shutdown. Now that B.C. is in Phase 3 and gradually re-opening, CERB (and in a few weeks, the recently announced EI program) needs to work hand-in-hand with incentives to return people to work, where appropriate. This could include a bonus tax credit based on wage levels or an awareness campaign about building resumés and upskill into higher-wage occupations or positions.

- **Reduce or defer property taxes and reduce or eliminate patio fees.** Given that the economic slowdown will be felt more keenly during the winter months, local governments must institute these policies as soon as possible (if they have not already), and continue these policies through 2021.

- **Expand liquor licensing.** Make pandemic-related licensing changes permanent and announce as soon as possible to give businesses proper planning time: allow restaurants to offer alcohol sales within expanded premises including patios, and allow more restaurants to offer alcohol sales, including for take-out. Ideally, permitting /licensing would be consistent across the CRD, allowing business operators with more than one location to apply their best practices across multiple locations easily. Making these changes permanent gives operators more certainty to recoup their losses from recent months and/or to hire more staff for increased demand.

- **Monitor commercial evictions.** Encourage the BC Government to monitor a new mutually beneficial process among landlords, tenants and local governments that encourages flexibility to ensure businesses are given a chance to succeed. Many landlords have demonstrated that they need incentives to use the leasing subsidy programs. In contrast, other landlords do need tenant churn to encourage recovery in the market (e.g., bring in businesses that have adapted to new conditions).

**Recommendation B: The provincial government and industry must work together to increase consumer confidence in shopping and eating locally.**

Many businesses rely on foot traffic from office workers. With the dramatic increase in remote work, this revenue source has been severely reduced. The Retail, Services and Restaurant Committee recommends the following:

- **Encourage local businesses to increase e-commerce.** Small businesses require grants, resources and training to scale up in digital infrastructure and marketing to benefit from the expanded customer base that e-commerce offers. This will help SME retailers gain presence in the context of the increasing presence of large multinationals.

- **Create communication tools that give British Columbians real-time information on safety practices in customer-facing businesses.** The provincial government could create guidelines for transportation businesses, tourist destinations, arts and music venues, restaurants, retail stores and service businesses to ensure a common playbook for safe operations during the pandemic.
At the same time, an app and door stickers and signage would give customers information on the protocols followed by these businesses. As a result, businesses and customers would gain an added sense of safety. To ensure integrity and effectiveness in the long-term, the system would need a reporting mechanism for non-compliance to discourage businesses from adopting unsafe practices. These could include negative media coverage, the loss of compliance signage and/or online ratings.

- **Build on the Buy BC program.** The Buy BC program could be expanded to incentivize local spending and entice spenders away from multinational e-commerce giants. The incentive could be a temporary relief program operated over 12 to 24 months to support local businesses. The Buy BC program could include a “rallying goal” (such as a 10% shift) that incentivizes consumer behavior. This could span food systems, household consumer goods and restaurants (and even expand to B2B supply chains). This could involve gamifying apps, bonus programs accelerated through social media and tax incentives for businesses that shift to local suppliers (within the parameters of free-trade agreements).

- **Create an incentive to return workers to commercial centres.** Where safe and in adherence with WorkSafeBC standards (or in rotating fashion), an incentive targeted at major employers, Government of BC and Crown agencies is needed to entice workers back into the office (and to shop and eat nearby). Incentives could include a local rewards card or points program coupled with marketing grants to Business Improvement Associations to temporarily boost awareness using local media. This issue impacts the region’s downtown core hardest as many government ministries and crown corporations, etc. are not encouraging staff to come to the office anytime soon.

- **The Government of BC could create a grant program to encourage business co-competition around best-practices.** Making this grant program available to formal or informal self-organized initiatives or coalitions (e.g., emerging “Good Work Victoria” based on Good Work Austin) encourages business collaboration on key topics. These include pricing strategies, bulk supply purchases, educating consumers on costs/gratuities, demonstrating value-proposition (vs. online or alternative), customer impact of supporting local, improving operational or supply-chain efficiencies and more. This grant would bring businesses (even those in competition) together to ensure as many of them survive as possible and help with rapid dissemination of key information, ideas and best practices.

**Recommendation C: All partners must work together on innovative solutions to build resilience for the future.**

As the economy recovers, the Retail, Services and Restaurant Committee recommends the following:

- **Create a regional housing and affordability strategy.** This strategy would work in tandem with the South Island Transportation Plan and examine the factors (population demographics, technology, climate change, land-use policy and in-migration) that affect housing and
affordability. Implementing solutions for housing affordability (e.g., expedited approvals for higher-density housing in commercial centres and multi-modal transportation) will improve overall affordability in the South Island region. This will decrease the pressure on businesses to increase wages while their profit margins remain small.

- **Encourage mixed-use zoning within commercial centres to increase the density of consumers within these centres.** Despite incentives to return workers to commercial centres, many workers throughout the region will continue to work from home even after the pandemic has subsided. This will have two major implications: 1) empty commercial space (and therefore lower demand for new commercial space); and, 2) fewer office workers patronizing the businesses that rely on them to survive. In considering these issues, we encourage local municipalities to explore creative policies that allow the rezoning of commercial-only areas into mixed-use (i.e., commercial on lower floors and residential above). This addresses these issues simultaneously as more consumers choose to live near and support retailers and restaurants in the commercial centres. It also reduces vacancy problems that may hit areas of our region for years to come.

- **Increase partnership at the regional level on economic planning.** Local governments must rally around the Regional Economic Recovery Plan by resourcing the projects, tabling policy or bylaw changes in an expedited fashion and encouraging adoption of reduced regulatory burdens — (even if only a temporary) to spark an increase in economic activity that the region will desperately need over the next 12 to 24 months.

- **Create a domestic free-trade pilot.** Canada benefits from international free-trade agreements but has many restrictions interprovincially within Canada. A multi-year domestic pilot to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade could have a positive impact into the billions of dollars. Small- and medium-sized businesses would be encouraged to find suppliers and customers within Canada because of reduced costs in the supply chain. A stronger Canadian supply chain would make Canada more competitive internationally.

- **Build economic vibrancy and inclusion through procurement initiatives.** We encourage all municipalities on the South Island to make immediate efforts to join the Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative43 (CCSPI) and adopt the policies put forth by CCSIPI and Buy Social Canada. Purchasing and procurement is a way that municipalities can play an active role in building social, environmental and economic outcomes in their own backyard from their own operations and budgets. Further, we encourage SIPP and partners (e.g., Greater Victoria Harbour Authority) to expand and scale an Indigenous-focused business directory and procurement initiative that ensures the economy becomes more inclusive. This directory could work with large corporate and crown buyers, including the health authorities, to ensure Indigenous entrepreneurs are building the capacity to compete for larger business deals.

43 Coastal Communities Social Procurement Initiative [https://ccspi.ca/](https://ccspi.ca/)
3. BACKGROUND

Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- Create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy.
- Identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding.
- Give confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation.
- Help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships.
- Ensure that the plan informs and is informed by broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector has unique circumstances, which is why the Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

- Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).
- Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.
- Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan.
- Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Retail, Services and Restaurants Committee

According to the Conference Board of Canada, retail spending in the Greater Victoria region exceeded $5.64-billion in 2019, which is proportionate to 31% of the region’s annual GDP of $18.32-billion (2012
dollars). In 2019, out of the region’s employment base of 195,000 people, 26,300 were employed in wholesale and retail trade and another 14,900 employed in accommodation and food services. The latter grew 10.4% in 2019 and, before the pandemic, was forecast to grow another 7.6% in 2020.

Committee Members

The committee members were selected for their experience, breadth of knowledge, understanding of sectors and community leadership. The Committee is represented by:

- Calen McNeil (Co-Chair), Owner, Big Wheel Burger / Zambri’s Restaurants
- Dallas Gislason (Co-Chair), Director of Economic Development, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Denny Warner, Executive Director, Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
- Laura-Beth Keane, Operations Manager, Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce
- Jeff Bray, Executive Director, Downtown Victoria Business Association
- Julie Lawlor, Executive Director, WestShore Chamber of Commerce
- Steve Pearce, Board Chair, Think Local First
- Megan Shaw, Executive Director, Sidney Business Improvement Association
- Karen Mason, Board President, Sooke Region Chamber of Commerce
- Bruce Williams, CEO, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- Al Hasham, President/CEO, Maximum Express Courier
- Darlene Holstein, General Manager, The Bay Centre

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Retail, Services and Restaurants Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met three times during May, June and July. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey from June 5 to 13 to a targeted group of retail, service and restaurant business owners from throughout the South Island region. The committee reviewed and analyzed the industry survey results along with other relevant industry reports, and used these to frame an additional survey completed only by committee members to inform a SWOT/future-casting meeting. This last meeting focused on identifying key themes, ideas and recommended actions for inclusion into this report.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing (Tech) sector faced a temporary slow-down as a result of COVID-19, but it has since seen an uptick in growth. For example, VIATEC’s technology job board had roughly 110 tech job openings at any one time before COVID-19. At the start of the lockdown, this number dropped to 30 but has since rebounded to more than 90 jobs and rising. The overall outlook is guardedly optimistic.

Moving forward, a protracted slowdown of the economy may ultimately impact this growth as many tech companies rely on capital and/or systems expenditures in businesses and government contracts. Sub-sectors within tech were affected differently. Software companies, for example, transitioned quickly to online work because many were already working in this vein. Advanced manufacturing companies, however, were harder hit given the face-to-face nature of the work.

Overall, COVID-19 has highlighted the sector’s overall resilience and its main challenges: access to skilled labour and sufficient digital infrastructure. It also highlights the crucial support role the tech sector plays for businesses in other sectors in our increasingly digital economy and the leadership role it can take to help organizations achieve a more digital and resilient future.

This report underlines the fact that the tech sector is constrained in its growth due to talent and digital infrastructure challenges. This impacts not only the sector’s ability to recover and expand post-COVID but also the ability of other sectors to rely on a strong and innovative tech sector.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable, and resilient economy for tomorrow.

44 The combined direct ($4.06-billion) and indirect ($1.16-billion) economic impact of the technology sector in Greater Victoria for 2017 was $5.22-billion — a 30% increase from the $4.03-billion estimated in 2013.
45 The technology sector is responsible for a substantial portion of the region’s employment. In 2017, there were 16,775 employees in the sector.
47 The technology sector in Greater Victoria is expected to continue to grow. The number of technology firms in Greater Victoria is expected to increase, reaching over 1,000 before 2020.
2. RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

Recommendation A: All partners must build on existing initiatives to increase and diversify the talent pool.

Before and during COVID-19, there has been a continuing lack of skilled labour for the tech sector. The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee recommends the following:

- **Create more grants for new hires and work experience opportunities for students.** These grants will help both employee and employer — employees gain valuable experience and employers gain innovative talent they might not otherwise be able to afford. These grants will also help counter the “brain drain” that occurs every year when a substantial portion of our university graduating students leave the region for their first professional opportunities.

- **Build on current immigration policies.** The Provincial Nominee Program and its express entry stream have been critical for quickly bringing high-quality talent into B.C. Ensuring that an increasing number of immigrants can enter Greater Victoria is crucial to making up the talent shortfalls where local talent is unavailable.

- **Expand funding to the Coast Capital Savings Innovation Centre and VIATEC’s Business Accelerator and Incubator (BAI) programs.** The University of Victoria’s Innovation Centre is currently oversubscribed: applications have increased more than 100% since the start of COVID-19. Similarly, VIATEC’s BAI program has a backlog of 114 applicants and could absorb substantially more entrepreneurs with additional program support. Incubators act as centres of excellence and ensure tech entrepreneurs achieve the skills necessary to turn their ideas into businesses. These new businesses are the tech sector’s fresh engines — and they are the small-, mid- and large-sized companies of the future.

- **Increase program size and turnaround time for the Startup Visa Program.** This program has seen a dramatic increase in applications since the start of COVID-19. International entrepreneurs want to be Canadian citizens and are willing to demonstrate they have viable tech businesses to start in the region. However, an application can take upwards of two years to process. Committing to a defined turnaround time of 90 days to review and process applications means 20 to 30 new tech companies could be started within the next year. Failure to expedite the process will hamper our competitive position and lose these companies to other regions.

- **Design and implement new programming to reduce barriers for marginalized and under-represented Canadians.** Based on best practices from Opportunity Hub — the largest multi-campus co-working space, entrepreneurship center and tech hub in the U.S. — new programming will help close the tech sector skills gap by being inclusive of people who are

48 [https://opportunityhub.co/](https://opportunityhub.co/)
dramatically underrepresented in tech right currently. By directly tracking Statistics Canada reporting, the current situation, and future goals can be established and tracked.

Early work has begun through VIATEC and the HR Tech Group to develop this programming. To date, program attendance in events related to inclusive hiring practices for tech-sector human resources has exceeded projected targets and needs to continue and expand. These programs are addressing critical inclusion issues while also extending the available talent pool for technology organizations. This recommendation will be integrated with the Indigenous Economy and Inclusive Economy Committee reports.

- **Design and implement new regional upskilling programs.** Additional upskill training programs provide opportunities to move workers from disrupted industries, marginalized workers and underemployed workers into the technology sector. Industry-designed curricula would certify a broad range of skills, such as software development, User Experience (UX) and digital marketing. Micro-credentialing, which has also been identified by the Education and Skills Committee as a need, would provide affordable training for potential employees and a new talent pool for employers. While this recommendation may take some years to deploy, it will provide a systemic solution for the most chronic resource constraint facing the sector.

**Recommendation B: All private and public partners must build on existing initiatives to enhance digital infrastructure.**

COVID-19 has dramatically accelerated the need for high-quality, reliable and affordable Internet access. All sectors, not just tech, need Internet access to become and remain globally competitive. Indeed, the region itself must be seen as a digitally efficient location to conduct and attract business. Digital connectivity must include high reliability and high accessibility to all sectors and all geographies.

Some issues, such as infrastructure and data residency rules, have dramatically slowed the ability to move quickly and efficiently to online and remote business operations. To assist the tech sector and all South Island sectors to respond to rapid changes brought on by COVID-19 — and to help them participate fully in the digital economy, the Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee recommends the following:

- **Prioritize digital infrastructure to be as important as physical infrastructure.** Unlike an earthquake or tsunami, this emergency did not destroy our physical infrastructure, but it further highlighted and accelerated our reliance on our digital infrastructure. To be globally competitive, workers throughout the region must be enabled to work efficiently from anywhere. COVID-19 recovery plans, both local and provincial, must include digital infrastructure goals at the front end of any capital spending programs.

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49 [https://www.viatec.ca/events/how-to-create-an-inclusive-hiring-process](https://www.viatec.ca/events/how-to-create-an-inclusive-hiring-process)
• **Build on initiatives to ensure all citizens can participate in the digital economy.** Beyond digital infrastructure, there needs to be enhanced support for training, tools and equipment to help all citizens become digitally capable. Marginalized or recently laid-off workers require special programs to ensure they can fully participate in these new opportunities. This recommendation aligns with the Inclusive Economy Committee recommendations.

• **Enhance the Connected Coast initiative**[^50]. In light of COVID-19, it is even more important that this initiative and others like it quickly deploy digital networks, so all rural and remote communities have effective Internet access.

• **Updating data residency rules.** Existing data residency rules need to be reviewed in light of the changing remote work environment. A sector committee should be convened to discuss this feasibility. Options to consider include:

  o allowing for greater cross-border data-sharing to enable a more resilient data infrastructure for future challenges;

  o looking for new technical solutions to enable greater business and research flexibility;

  o patriating this capability into Canada; or

  o a combination of all of the above. There is an opportunity for Canada to lead in this area as a safe haven for data, making Canada’s data banks as safe as the physical banks of Switzerland, for example.

**Recommendation C: The provincial government must update financial and programmatic support for tech businesses.**

Many pre- and early-revenue companies are ineligible for government financial assistance as they are not yet at the profitability stage. This, in turn, constrains growth and the ability to hire talent at this critical growth stage.

To help small businesses scale up, the Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee recommends:

• **Build on the National Research Council concierge program.** Add to this program a better screening process to direct businesses to the right supports, and streamline applications so that one application can cover multiple programs. Consider using more automated learning tools to help address these complex business needs more efficiently, applying new technologies to help technology companies more effectively.

[^50]: [https://connectedcoast.ca/](https://connectedcoast.ca/)
- **Adapt program criteria to allow pre-revenue companies to participate in funding opportunities.** This could include equity positions that could be offered for funding support or refundable loans.

- **Change to a sliding scale on revenue criteria.** For example, a 20% loss could allow for half the participation rate in funding.

**Recommendation D: The tech sector must design a digital marketplace to bring technology to other industries and sectors in need.**

As a result of COVID-19, the skills, products and services offered by the tech sector are needed by other sectors more than ever. These include remote working, online services, digital tools development and e-marketing. Supporting a more effective remote working environment creates tangible benefits for quality of life. These include reduced commuting times and fewer greenhouse gases (due to reduced commuting).

There is also the potential for smaller regions to compete more evenly with larger, more expensive cities if digital infrastructure and services are at appropriate levels. This capability will allow employees to live in more geographically diverse locations, which in turn will help rural and small communities to create prosperity and help to distribute economic growth outside the bigger cities.

The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee recommends:

- **Create a digital marketplace for tech.** Modeled after the BC Government procurement call for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the marketplace would offer digital marketing, connectivity capability, e-commerce, and other services and products, to those struggling to transition to online work.

- **Enhance funding to support non-tech companies in their adoption of new tech tools and approaches.** Several initiatives have recently been announced related to digitizing Main Street Businesses, including Digital Farmer’s Markets and Innovate BC funding, which helps non-tech companies learn to be tech-savvy. These programs jumpstart many companies on this critical journey. A full survey of the various sector-based task forces will reveal other opportunities that should be reviewed and supported.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the South Island’s diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;
● identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

● provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

● help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;

● ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

**Sector Committees Objectives**

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

● Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).

● Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.

● Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan.

● Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

**Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee**

The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee represents the broad set of businesses and enterprises associated with technology development. These include, but are not limited to, small startups, large regional and national organizations, product and service providers, and organizations tasked with supporting and growing the sector. While many issues and opportunities are unique to this community, the issues of most or all of the Rising Economy Taskforce committees are also felt within this sector. To that end, all committee reports have a bearing on this community and vice versa.
Committee Members

The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee was selected for its experience, diversity, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. It was made up of the following members:

- Dan Gunn (Co-Chair), CEO, VIATEC
- Jacques van Campen (Co-Chair), Director of Innovation, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Dan Ruscheinski, Senior Director, Esri Canada
- Brian Kingham, Vice President, Schneider Electric
- Jerome Etwaroo, Associate Director, Coast Capital Innovation Centre, University of Victoria
- Sarah Gulbrandsen, President & COO, Ring Partner
- Chris Schmit, Manager, Shaw Communications
- Scott Dewis, Chief Visionary Officer, RaceRocks
- Alan Winter (Advisor), Former B.C. Innovation Commissioner

Additionally, other community members were engaged to provide insight and feedback to the committee throughout the process.

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Committee was struck on May 28 and met four times over the following two months. The committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to key community and industry respondents. The committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and used future-casting workshops to identify the recommendations, ideas, actions highlighted in this document.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee Report

1. ISSUE

Tourism, arts, culture, sports and recreation are unique but overlapping industries. Together they represent more than $2.5-billion in economic impact for Greater Victoria each year. Since mid-March, when the state of emergency was declared, the COVID-19 pandemic has created near-disastrous conditions for most of these sectors. Each sector continues to function within extremely constrained conditions. Beyond the economic impact of these sectors, the mental and physical wellness they nurture cannot be overstated.

This report aligns with the work being done by Destination Greater Victoria along with the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia for provincial-level components. It includes voices from our region’s arts, culture, entertainment, sports and recreation organizations. The committee has prepared this report to highlight the devastating effect COVID-19 has had on these sectors and recommend possible solutions for moving forward. New policies and regulations are required to help these sectors adapt to working within — and surviving — the pandemic’s limitations. Where that is not possible, new funding initiatives are required to keep them solvent through 2021.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**For Local Governments and the Government of B.C.**

Recommendation A: The local and provincial governments must assist businesses in adapting to the “new normal” and provide a more responsive regulatory environment.

For businesses that survive the current economic climate, a strong business environment in Greater Victoria and the province will be even more crucial. Businesses will need security and flexibility to build, invest and capitalize on emerging opportunities following the pandemic. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

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51 Data are from Destination Greater Victoria, CRD Arts Committee, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Association, and the Vancouver Island South Film and Media Commission.
- **Reduce or defer property taxes and reduce or eliminate patio fees.** Given that the economic slowdown will be more keenly felt during the winter months, local governments must continue these policies through 2021.

- **Expand liquor licensing.** Make pandemic-related licensing changes permanent and allow restaurants to offer alcohol sales within expanded premises. Ideally, licensing would be consistent across the CRD, allowing business operators with more than one location to apply their best practices across multiple locations easily. Making these changes permanent gives operators more certainty with which to recoup their losses from recent months and/or to hire more staff to service the increased demand.

- **Create special protocols for outdoor venues.** Entertainment industries (live music, and cultural or special events) need certain economies of scale to be viable. During the pandemic, indoor venues are less likely to be possible within WorkSafeBC health and safety parameters. Outdoor venues, however, can isolate segments of the audience within the 50-person limit and make other arrangements for spacing and tracking attendees. More outdoor venues will allow musicians, artists, and event companies much-needed revenue without increasing the health risk, all while bringing emotional relief to a population suffering from isolation and increased stress.

- **Create toolkits to help tourism operators adapt to the new normal.**
  - Model these on the toolkits available from tourismrecovery.ca and the Adventure Travel Trade Association’s (ATTA) toolkit for adventure tourism. The goal is to help operators move past immediate crisis management and focus on health and safety, capacity, adaptation, change management, HR and financial planning. The toolkit could be created in partnership with TIABC (and other partners like ATTA for niche and peripheral experiences and industries) and would have financial support to incentivize participation.
  - Continue to invest in building a sustainable tourism industry (financial, environmental, cultural and social) and enhancing Greater Victoria’s already well-known reputation as a best-practice destination. This includes rewarding best practices for health and safety, employment standards, training, diversity and inclusiveness while operating to the highest environmental standards.

- **Communicate a clear pathway from Phase 3 to Phase 4 of the provincial reopening plan.** The current plan leaves many variables open-ended, which causes confidence issues in the marketplace. This is already having a negative economic impact as business investors and conference and event planners divert investment into other markets that have greater clarity in their reopening plans. The provincial government can issue clarifying addendums that make it clear that as COVID-19 tracing technologies and treatments improve, the pathway to Phase 4...
would have incremental — but very clear — steps that give the market confidence to make firm decisions and investments.

- **Assess B.C.’s competitive landscape.** As a medium-term recovery tactic, the province — through partnerships with Business Council of British Columbia, Invest in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada and others — should invest in robust monitoring and public reporting of tax rates, regulatory burdens, trade barriers (both interprovincial and international) and the inflation rate relative to nearby competitors (neighbouring provinces and states). This will inform how our province can remain strategically relevant in a post-pandemic economic recession and recovery.

**For All Partners**

**Recommendation B: All partners must work together to create and implement innovative solutions to increase domestic consumer and business confidence.**

Domestic consumers and businesses need mechanisms whereby they are assured that shopping, traveling and investing domestically are not only safe but necessary to restart our economy. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends the following:

- **Deploy communications tools that give British Columbians real-time information on health and safety practices in customer-facing businesses.** The provincial government could create guidelines for tourist destinations, arts and music venues, restaurants, retail stores, and service businesses to ensure a common playbook for safe and sustainable operations during and after the pandemic. At the same time, an app and door stickers/signage would give customers information on the protocols being followed by these businesses. As a result, businesses and customers would gain an added sense of safety and security. To ensure integrity and effectiveness in the long-term, the system would need a reporting mechanism for non-compliance so businesses could be disincentivized (e.g., losing a compliance rating or negative media coverage) for unsafe practices.

- **Encourage safe domestic travel.** A celebrity campaign was launched by Destination Canada to encourage domestic travel, but a coordinated campaign at the provincial, interprovincial, and federal level over the next 12 to 18 months is required as international travel remains unlikely. Elected and public service leaders (e.g., Mayors, the Provincial Health Minister, the Premier of B.C. and the Provincial Health Officer) could include pre-approved and consistent key messages in their regular briefings. The messaging would be a call-to-action for British Columbians to shop and travel locally to help offset the economic and financial crisis caused by the pandemic.

- **Refresh and expand Greater Victoria’s brand into a regional networked brand portfolio** As B.C. gains a positive reputation for how it has managed the pandemic from a governance and public

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52 Destination Canada videos featuring well-known figures like Rick Mercer and Peter Mansbridge have already been circulating.
health and safety standpoint, there is an emerging opportunity to position Greater Victoria favourably within a new global context in which mid-sized city-regions around the world compete based on health, safety, governance, culture, quality of life and economic vibrancy. The Committee recommends that SIPP and its partners coordinate a networked marketing portfolio and messaging campaign around why Greater Victoria is a desirable place to study, live, work, start a business and invest. The Committee further recommends that a collaborative brand family portfolio and creative campaign be developed with key partners to help refresh the brand as a thriving, globally-fluent and diverse city region. The Provincial government should create similar messaging that would work for CreativeBC, Destination BC, Trade+Invest BC, InnovateBC and other channels.

- **Increase regional emphasis to attract sporting and non-sporting events to Greater Victoria.** Stronger regional buy-in from municipalities throughout Greater Victoria would allow more events to be attracted here as both a short-term recovery tactic and a long-term high-impact strategy. Therefore, the committee recommends the following:
  - Municipal governments need to become involved and invest more in Destination Greater Victoria’s efforts to attract sports, major conferences and other non-sports events to the region (several municipal governments have not invested, though most have).

**For the Federal and Provincial Governments**

**Recommendation C: The federal and provincial governments must increase the competitive business environment through infrastructure and programming investment.**

Innovative and timely investments will be necessary to capture opportunities arising from the pandemic. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

- **Invest in Camosun College to create meaningful equity that results in film sector education programming.** The provincial and federal governments should grant Camosun College $10-million to secure equity in a film studio project on Camosun’s Interurban campus. This unique approach would align educational programming to an on-campus film studio with three sound stages. This investment would make the region competitive in this globally growing industry where there are more projects in the pipeline than studios available to create them. Investing in Camosun College would help ensure students from the South Island region can fill many of these high-paying jobs.

- **Invest in a Canadian international gateway: Belleville Terminal.** Exploring the role of stimulus funding to jump-start this project has been a priority infrastructure investment for some time. Through this port, the South Island region is an international gateway, but a major investment is needed and has been in development. Many partners have prioritized this, but buy-in from the provincial government is needed to leverage federal investment.
- **Investment in cultural infrastructure.** Decaying local arts venues need to be refurbished and enhanced to take advantage of domestic cultural tourism. The federal and provincial governments need to make increased investments and coordinate cultural infrastructure programs to support existing activities.

**For All Levels of Government**

**Recommendation D:** All levels of government must invest in financial initiatives to support financial solvency through 2021.

Tourism, arts, culture, sports and recreation businesses and organizations are barely able to operate — and some not operating at all. To ensure this segment of Greater Victoria’s economy survives COVID-19, financial measures must be in place through 2021 to ensure these organizations remain solvent long enough to rebuild when the province fully re-opens in Phase 4. Extending the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was a good example of the type of initiatives required. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

- **Fulfill the stimulus package** request from the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC). A $680-million request was made by TIABC to the province on July 21, 2020, to help keep the tourism industry solvent in the coming months and years.

- **Fulfill the set of phase one and phase two solvency recommendations from Destination Greater Victoria.** These recommendations were made to both the provincial and federal governments.

- **Expand the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF) program and criteria.** The RRRF administered by the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is almost fully subscribed. This funding shortage will mean a shortfall during a second wave (or prolonged first wave as seems to be happening) of the pandemic and it needs to be expanded. Furthermore, it has become clear that the program’s parameters — which focus on rural areas and non-tourism economic sectors in Western Canada — exclude the vast majority of, if not all, businesses within the Greater Victoria visitor economy. These businesses have been hit disproportionally hard and require assistance.

- **Implement and monitor a commercial eviction moratorium.** Administered by the provincial government, this moratorium will ensure that businesses and organizations have the long-term stability to plan for recovery into 2021 and beyond.

- **Develop a clear plan for clean and safe streets.** While we realize that this pandemic has a significant impact on the region’s vulnerable homeless population, it is important to note that the economic impacts have resulted in increased panhandling, street crimes, break and enters,

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54 [https://www.tourismvictoria.com/corporate-information/plan](https://www.tourismvictoria.com/corporate-information/plan)
etc. and can have an impact on the tourism market. Residents are less likely to frequent impacted areas, a trend that will continue if these issues are not addressed and a plan is not communicated.

- **Expand programs that support musicians and artists.**
  
  o The provincial and federal could institute programs that support living arrangements for artists and musicians. This would allow for several positive outcomes. Reducing the pressure on artists to find a means of surviving would allow them to create art and music, which in turn benefits the community and events organizations and venues. Further, our communities are at risk of becoming sterile without live art and music projects. This program could be modeled after Iceland's (e.g., their Artist's Salaries\(^{55}\) program is a good example) and could be available proven professional artists (or new graduates of specific and defined arts and music programs) and could be run as a three-year pilot program — with measured outcomes — before exploring permanence.

  o Municipal governments could increase grants and commission artists for public projects. This supports artists and adds vibrancy, inspiration and appeal to our public spaces, which is especially important during this time of isolation.

  o Municipal governments could support an artist-in-residence where artists would install public projects during a one-month residency. In the Capital Regional District, this could result in 156 residencies\(^{56}\) throughout a one-year project (12 residencies in 13 municipalities). Artists would be paid a one-month stipend or honorarium and would be required to submit a working plan with projected deliverables.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the region's diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

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\(^{55}\) [https://en.rannis.is/funding/art-culture/artists-stipend-fund/](https://en.rannis.is/funding/art-culture/artists-stipend-fund/)

\(^{56}\) 13 municipalities over 12 months, with one residency per month.
● provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

● help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;

● ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

**Sector Committees Objectives**

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

● Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience);

● Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive;

● Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan;

● Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

**Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee**

Under normal circumstances, the Greater Victoria region boasts vibrant tourism, arts and cultural, sporting and recreation sectors. These sectors have a robust impact on the region economically and culturally and contribute to the health and well-being of the region’s citizens.

Tourism alone has a $2.3-billion economic impact and employs 22,000 people.\(^{57}\) The region’s arts and culture sector contributes $177-million per year and includes more than 1,500 artists and 3,600 cultural workers.\(^ {58}\) Sport tourism brings in $117-million per year,\(^ {59}\) not including the impact of the robust facilities and recreation centres available for locals to enjoy. The region’s film and media sector has been growing steadily for the last few years with more than $20-million in annual production spending. This is

\(^{57}\) Destination Greater Victoria  
\(^{58}\) Capital Regional District Arts Committee, 2011  
\(^{59}\) Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission
still only a fraction of the $3.2-billion provincial film industry, but with a studio on the South Island, coupled with global growth trends, this can increase over time.

Committee Members

The Committee members were selected for their experience, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. The Committee is represented by:

- Frank Bourree (Co-Chair), President, Bourree & Associates
- Dallas Gislason (Co-Chair), Director of Economic Development, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Nick Blasko, President, Amelia Artists; Co-Founder, Atomique Productions
- Paul Nursey, President and CEO, Destination Greater Victoria
- Mandy Farmer, CEO, Accent Inns and Hotel Zed
- Deirdre Campbell, Managing Director, Beattie Tartan
- Robert Bettauer, CEO, Pacific Institute of Sport Excellence (PISE)
- Franz Lehrbass, Executive Director, Royal & McPherson Theatres Society
- Lisa Nordstrom, General Manager, Sidney Pier Hotel
- Ian Robertson, CEO, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA)
- Jon Tupper, Director, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV)
- Kegan McFadden, Executive Director, Victoria Arts Council
- Kathleen Gilbert, Executive Director, Vancouver Island South Film & Media Commission
- Keith Wells, Executive Director, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission

Summary of Process and Research Findings

The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met three times during May, June and July. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to a group of mostly arts, entertainment and sporting organizations throughout the South Island region. The Committee also partnered with Tourism Vancouver Island to receive results of the surveys they were administering on behalf of the province. These results included input from tourism operators and stakeholders from across the South Island. The Committee reviewed and analyzed survey results and other relevant reports and used these to frame a SWOT/future-casting meeting. This last meeting was focused on the identification of key themes, ideas and recommendations actions for insertion into this report.

To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.
Transportation Committee Report

1. ISSUE

The transportation sector in Greater Victoria employs approximately 8,000\(^{60}\) people. This sector includes many different modes, organizations and major infrastructure hubs (such as the Victoria International Airport, which alone has an economic impact of $880-million in direct and indirect output per year\(^{61}\)). The sector — perhaps unlike any other economic sector — serves as a fundamental infrastructure for the rest of the economy.

The risk is that the impacts of COVID-19 will damage this “infrastructure” in such a way that the rest of the economy will have difficulty recovering. Issues like work from home (WFH) policies implemented by organizations of all types, border closures, grounded flight routes, decreased consumer willingness to travel and online meetings replacing work travel will have a lasting effect. Taken together, these have resulted in a significant loss of ridership and revenues across the sector and exacerbated challenges for goods movement.

This report has been prepared to highlight the above challenges and aligns with the recovery work being done by Destination Greater Victoria because of the close connection between travel and tourism. It is also important to note that the varying needs of the public and private transportation systems mean that they will require different supports in the coming months.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A: Over and above all recommendations in this report, all levels of government must build on existing financial supports to ensure the solvency of transportation businesses through 2021 and the survival of our critical transportation ecosystem in B.C.

Transportation and travel businesses and organizations are operating in a severely reduced manner or not operating at all. Transportation forms the underpinning of Greater Victoria’s economy.

For this sector to survive the COVID-19 recession, financial measures must be put in place through 2021 to ensure private businesses remain solvent long enough to rebuild later. Extending the Canada Employee Wage Subsidy (CEWS) is a good example of the type of initiative required.

\(^{60}\) Transportation and Warehousing, 8,000 FTEs, Conference Board of Canada, Metropolitan Outlook, February 2020.

The Transportation Committee recommends:

- **Fulfill the stimulus package** request from the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC). A $680-million request was made by TIABC to the Province on July 21, 2020, to help keep the tourism industry solvent in the coming months and years.

- **Fulfill the set of solvency recommendations from Destination Greater Victoria.** These phase one and phase two recommendations were made to both the provincial and federal governments.

- **Create a complementary program to the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF).** The RRRF administered by the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is nearly fully subscribed. This funding shortage will mean a shortfall during a second wave of the pandemic and does not allow for re-hiring employees. A complementary or renewed program is desperately needed to fill the funding gaps and include interest-free loans with a forgivable portion.

- **Assess B.C.’s competitive landscape.** As a medium-term recovery tactic, the provincial government — through partnerships with Business Council of British Columbia, Invest in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada and others — should invest in robust monitoring and public reporting of tax rates, regulatory burdens, trade barriers (both interprovincial and international) and the inflation rate relative to nearby competitors (neighbouring provinces and states). This monitoring and public reporting will inform how our province can remain strategically relevant in a post-pandemic economic recession and recovery.

- **Create a domestic free-trade pilot.** Canada benefits from international free-trade agreements. A multi-year domestic pilot to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade could have a positive impact in the billions of dollars across Canada. Small- and medium-sized businesses would be encouraged to find suppliers and customers within Canada because of reduced costs in the supply chain. Increased interprovincial business activities would spark more travel and transport of goods within the country. Furthermore, stronger Canadian supply chains and products would make Canada more competitive internationally.

**Recommendation B: All levels of government must work to enable and then to promote safe travel.**

Governments and elected leaders should openly encourage travel where and when it is safe to do so. The Transportation Committee recommends:

- **Create consumer confidence to travel by launching communication tools that give British Columbians real-time information on safety practices.** The provincial government could create

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63 [https://www.tourismvictoria.com/corporate-information/plan](https://www.tourismvictoria.com/corporate-information/plan)
guidelines for transportation businesses, tourist destinations, arts and music venues, restaurants, retail stores and service businesses to ensure a common playbook for safe operations during the pandemic. At the same time, an app and door stickers and related signage would give customers information on the protocols being followed by these businesses.

As a result, businesses and customers would gain an added sense of safety. To ensure integrity and effectiveness in the long-term, the system would need a reporting mechanism for non-compliance to discourage businesses from adopting unsafe practices. This could include negative media coverage, loss of compliance signage, and/or online ratings.

- **Encourage safe domestic travel.** A celebrity campaign from Destination Canada has already begun to encourage domestic travel, but a coordinated campaign at the provincial, interprovincial and federal levels over the next 12 to 18 months is required, as international travel remains unlikely to rebound in the short term. Elected and public service leaders (e.g., Mayors, the Provincial Health Minister, the Premier of B.C. and the Provincial Health Officer) could include pre-approved and consistent key messages in their regular briefings. The messaging would be a call-to-action for British Columbians to travel locally to help offset the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

- **Invest in modernized border technologies.** New COVID-19 testing technology will allow for safe international border crossings where and when appropriate to increase domestic travel. Investments are already being made to develop these technologies globally. The Federal government needs to accelerate, implement and build adoption and consistency across the country’s airports.

- **Ensure sufficient funding to maintain transit service levels.** The Victoria Regional Transit Commission needs to ensure it provides sufficient levels of operational and capital (bus-only lanes) funding to maintain service levels during the pandemic and to expand as appropriate. There is also a role for municipal leaders to encourage ridership and compliance with safety protocols. If ridership declines, there is a risk that political will to fund transit will also decline, creating a downward spiral as reduced service leads to reduced ridership, and therefore reduced funding.

**Recommendation C: Greater Victoria and the Provincial government (with Federal Government support) must partner more effectively on the South Island Transportation Strategy.**

The South Island Transportation Plan (STP) will help propel Greater Victoria into modern, multi-modal city planning. Benefits include reduced commute times that result in better mental and physical health, reduced greenhouse gasses and saved time and money. To support this initiative, the Transportation Committee recommends:

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64 CBC videos featuring prominent Canadians such as Rick Mercer and Peter Mansbridge.
• **Commission a regional authority** to assess the long-term changes, trends, land-use policies, and political intentions for transportation and then align strategic investments with the multi-modal South Island Transportation Strategy. The commission would also plan for long-term changes (e.g., integrated and Smart Cities-driven multi-modal systems).

• **Invest in a Canadian international gateway and transportation hub: Belleville Terminal.** Explore the role of stimulus funding in jump-starting this project, which has been a priority infrastructure investment in Greater Victoria for some time. The South Island is an international gateway through this port of entry, but a major investment is needed and has been in development for some time. Many partners have prioritized this; however, buy-in from the provincial government is needed to leverage federal investment.

• **Preserve the Island’s rail infrastructure and right-of-ways.** If the South Island Transportation Plan suggests moving forward with rail now, then the South Island portion of the infrastructure should be the top priority. The SITP should also ensure other transportation modes are integrated with the rail system for a seamless South Island Smart Cities approach, which prioritizes the movement of people and goods, including active transportation along rail routes. The federal government should provide funding to match the provincial commitment and off-set the municipal portions (which will be restrained due to the pandemic’s fiscal challenges).

**Recommendation D:** The provincial government, the education sector and transportation employers must create new apprenticeship and training opportunities to address labour shortages.

Despite the COVID-19 impact on unemployment levels, the shortage of transportation personnel requires a more strategic approach as retirements in the sector will open new opportunities. In the long term, apprenticeships would create clear pathways to well-paid transportation careers while maintaining the current certification training system. Benefits from an apprenticeship program could include a larger and more diverse talent pool, local people for local supply chains, and improving safety by strengthening maintenance practices. The Transportation Committee recommends:

• **Pilot an apprenticeship program through Camosun College.** This would include returning air-brake training to the local market.

**Recommendation E:** Greater Victoria can take advantage of B.C.’s positive management of the pandemic.

British Columbia is gaining a positive reputation for how it has managed the pandemic from the public health, safety and governance perspectives. This reputation creates the potential for new marketing of B.C. and Greater Victoria. The Transportation Committee recommends:
3. BACKGROUND

Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits

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- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;
- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;
- provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;
- help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;
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Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

- Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience).
- Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive.
- Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan.
- Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Transportation Committee

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the transportation sector (inclusive of warehousing) employed approximately 8,000 people in Greater Victoria in 2019 and was forecast to grow in 2020
(before the pandemic impacts). The sector is made up of multiple stakeholder organizations operating a range of public and private enterprises and key infrastructure assets.

**Committee Members**

Transportation Committee members were selected for their experience, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. The Committee is represented by:

- John Wilson (Co-Chair), President and CEO, Wilson’s Group of Companies
- Dallas Gislason (Co-Chair), Director of Economic Development, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Geoff Dickson, President and CEO, Victoria Airport Authority
- Randy Wright, President, Harbour Air
- Patrick Nangle, CEO, Modo Co-operative
- Greg Hill, Manager, Corporate Strategy & Performance, BC Transit
- Larry Stevenson, CEO, Island Rail Corridor
- Captain Jamie Marshall, VP Shipbuilding & Innovation, BC Ferries

**Summary of Process and Research Findings**

The Transportation Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April. It met three times during May and June. The committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to the region’s primary transportation industry leaders. The committee also reviewed and analyzed the industry survey results along with other relevant reports and hosted a SWOT/future-casting meeting to identify key themes, ideas and recommendations actions for insertion into this document.

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