

## **Business Coalition Asks Metro to Allow Dialogue to Resolve Regional Growth Strategy Flaws**

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Vancouver, BC—The British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of British Columbia and the Urban Development Institute are asking Metro Vancouver and its member municipalities to agree to allow their participation in the non-binding resolution process that is being established to settle the Regional Growth Strategy.

The three organizations have formed the Business Coalition for a Sustainable Region to seek resolution of the concerns that a broad range of business organizations have raised regarding the proposed Regional Growth Strategy, so that the plan will support, rather than undercut, affordable housing, transit efficiency, job creation, and a strong economy.

“The current version of Metro Vancouver’s Regional Growth Strategy contains critical flaws, and needs more work if it is to effectively facilitate sustainable growth for businesses and families in our region,” said John Winter, President and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce. “Small and medium sized businesses create and maintain jobs, and supply our goods and services. These businesses support sustainable regional planning, and want to ensure that the Regional Growth Strategy is workable, and will support - and be supported by - a healthy and sustainable economy.”

The Regional Growth Strategy failed to achieve the required unanimous support from all Metro Vancouver member municipalities. The Province then directed, as contemplated by the *Local Government Act*, that the Regional Growth Strategy proceed to a non-binding dispute resolution process, with the particulars of the process to be determined by the parties, and with invitations to be sent to each municipality in Metro Vancouver.

On Monday, May 2, Coquitlam re-iterated its desire for a process that involves elected officials, and discussions with key stakeholders. If Coquitlam and Metro Vancouver are unable to agree on the form of the dispute resolution process, the matter goes back to the Province to decide.

“The non-binding resolution process is optimal if it allows for a meaningful and badly needed dialogue regarding the concerns the business community has raised, and the suggestions it has made for addressing them” said Maureen Enser, Executive Director, Urban Development Institute Pacific Region. “It is important that there be discussions with the people who create jobs, manufacture and move goods, supply key services and build homes. The Regional Growth Strategy has to address all elements of sustainability. The region won’t be livable if it does not viably address housing affordability.”

The members of the Business Coalition for a Sustainable Region have expressed significant concerns about the Regional Growth Strategy’s incomplete reflection of business and economic realities. They believe that the plan as proposed would damage the region’s ability to adapt to an ever-changing global economy, continuing local population growth, evolving technologies, emerging environmental constraints, and changes in fuel costs and transportation infrastructure.

“British Columbia and the world will continue to evolve rapidly over the next 30 years, in ways that can’t realistically be foreseen today. To be successful and sustainable in future years, our regional plan needs an effective mechanism for regular updating. The proposed amendment process would be time-consuming and bureaucratic, and would complicate rather than support investment growth” said Greg D’Avignon, President and CEO of the B.C. Business Council.

“Another problem is that the proposed RGS is not based on any economic strategy. The lack of responsiveness of the plan to business community input on the port economy, housing affordability, transit and regulatory efficiency has been frustrating. Everyone will benefit from a balanced and effective Regional Growth Strategy, but the plan will not achieve its sustainability goals without properly dealing with the issues we have raised. The region’s land use regime is a key to future livability and economic prosperity for both business and families in our region.”

“We are not asking that Metro start over, and we are quite hopeful that a solution can be found that would leave much of the document untouched. But to get there in time for the RGS to be adopted before the municipal elections, there has to be a proper dialogue regarding these concerns, and an examination of possible solutions. And that needs to happen sooner rather than later,” Maureen Enser added.

The Greater Vancouver Gateway Council, and the Vancouver Board of Trade, have advised that they share a number of the concerns raised by the Business Coalition, and support its request.

## **Background**

The BC Chamber of Commerce is an association representing the interests and concerns of local Chambers of Commerce and business members from across the province. Through the BC Chamber of Commerce, members access benefits, partnerships, and networking opportunities, and advocate to Provincial and Federal governments to ensure their concerns are being heard. Through a network of chambers across the province, the BC Chamber represents 32,000 businesses.

The Business Council of British Columbia is an association representing approximately 250 major business enterprises engaged in business in British Columbia. Its members are drawn from all major sectors of the provincial economy, including forest products, mining, manufacturing, transportation, agri-food, telecommunications, information technology, financial services, energy, tourism, retail, construction, healthcare, education, and professional services.

The Urban Development Institute (UDI) is an association of the development industry and its related professions in British Columbia. Its more than 500 corporate members include the leading development, architectural, planning, legal, financial, and construction firms in BC, as well as the government bodies. The development industry is critical to the success of the

Province, annually generating \$25 billion in economic activity and 250,000 jobs for British Columbians.

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