

Background

October 11, 2012

BC AGENDA FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

Advisory Board – Terms of Reference

Background

The *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* is an innovative plan to inform and advance public discussion in BC around the broad objective of providing a robust policy foundation for building and maintaining a strong provincial economy that fulfills the long-term potential of the province.

Within this overall objective, the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* is also designed to improve the connection between businesses and British Columbians, by enabling a better understanding that our collective economic well-being is a pre-requisite for ensuring overall societal well-being. What makes this discussion different is a recognition that a simple and traditional defense of ‘free enterprise’ in the aftermath of the global financial crisis will fail. Instead, what is needed is a thoughtful attempt to achieve a stronger connection between businesses, citizens and the economy. In this context, the plan acknowledges the challenge of ensuring that, as we translate the economic opportunities our province has into reality, it is important that the public have confidence that the benefits of economic growth and economic progress are being shared across the population.

Within the design framework, the focus is centered on grounding foundational economic policies around competitive taxation, sound fiscal management, effective regulatory processes, a strong education system, a skilled workforce, well planned infrastructure, and a healthy society and environment, within an overarching objective to diversify and maximize economic opportunities for all British Columbians. Rather than a preoccupation with policies that re-distribute wealth, the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* will aim to establish greater connectivity between the province’s economic opportunities and outputs, on the one hand, and the well-being of its citizens and businesses, on the other.

While ambitious in the sense of asking for a higher calling of engagement and seeking to change (to the degree possible) the policy discourse in BC, the plan for the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* is modest in structure, and realistic in concentrating on a limited number of key topics and issues. The path to shared prosperity is undoubtedly a long one, with divergent views on the correct plan for improving our standard of living. Debate is an important part of the process, albeit it needs to be rooted in a solid empirical foundation and to support an informed dialogue.

Looking ahead, the province does face some pressing decisions that need to be addressed. These decisions are set against a backdrop of global uncertainty and strong competition for investment dollars and high-value economic activity that leads to increased/improved employment. A significant part of the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* initiative involves working to embrace and understand the changes influencing and the opportunities before the province. As the *Building the BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity - Introduction* document explains, there are important decision points for our economy in front of us - ones that will have cascading effects for decades to come.

Purpose of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is a group of respected and trusted British Columbians brought together to review, discuss and ultimately help shape the content of the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity*. The intent of the exercise is to elevate the traditional discourse around economic issues in BC, and in doing so, to achieve greater prosperity for the population through factual, respectful and relevant debate to inform sound public policy.

To ensure that the Business Council and the BC Chamber of Commerce can define a set of policy foundations and new ideas that meet the objectives outlined, the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* Advisory Council is designed to play an important contributory oversight and commentary role within the initiative.

The Advisory Council will work with policy experts from the Business Council and the BC Chamber of Commerce at an early stage to confidentially discuss, review and shape the draft policy products for the *BC Agenda*. These draft documents will initially be developed by staff with input from past and current research, policy experts, and from a broad collection of data, ideas and approaches from other jurisdictions.

The Advisory Council will also play a role in the planned regional and provincial summits, which are intended to gather regional and broader provincial input into a draft interim *Agenda* report. In advance of the provincial summit in 2013, the Advisory Council will again be engaged to provide input and discuss the draft framework report that would flow from the analysis undertaken to that point. Further details on the regional summits and the provincial summit will be provided as the *BC Agenda* is developed.

After releasing an interim report in early March, the Advisory Council would take a period of time off for the election process in BC to conclude through April and May, reconvening again in late May to discuss a final roadmap report that would be targeted for release in either June or September.

While the Advisory Council will not be asked to endorse and/or be held accountable for policy outputs, recommendations or particular ideas, it is expected that members of the Council will review and discuss a public position for the Council as the process moves towards a conclusion in the summer of 2013.

Finally, it must be stressed that the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* is a non-partisan undertaking. The goal is to develop a coherent and credible set of ideas and recommendations to advance the province's economic well-being and help achieve its full potential in a way that benefits all citizens. We expect that the ideas, suggested new ways of doing things, and other recommendations will be relevant and useful regardless of whom BC voters choose to govern the province in May 2013 and beyond. This intent to elevate the level of policy dialogue in BC is a fundamental component of the *BC Agenda* process and will be reflected in both the process and products of *the BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity*.

Policy Framework

As part of its work, the Advisory Council will be asked to review and contribute to several policy outputs, including:

- (1) A foundational policy document that establishes some principles for creating a strong economy based on shared prosperity, and that establishes a vision for meeting BC's full potential .
- (2) One or more commissioned 'think pieces' that will help to set the context and shape the policy framework for the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity*.
- (3) An interim framework report outlining some higher level, key policy priorities as well as actions to be taken by non-governmental stakeholders (this will include proposals for institutional reform) for the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity*.
- (4) A 'road-map' document, the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity*, which builds a coherent framework for key strategic directions, new processes and initiatives.
- (5) Reports from the regional and provincial summits.
- (6) Other policy and research material that may be brought forward as part of the process.

Importantly, the Advisory Council will not be asked, or put in a position, to pass direct commentary on specific projects. A core objective of the Advisory Council is to reflect on broader market and societal forces that impact our opportunities as a province and influence the policy discourse. As this discussion could become quite expansive and even overwhelming, the scope will be focused largely on the economic dimensions that nurture and facilitate shared prosperity. Still, there will some opportunity to delve into topics such as governance reform, health care, those at risk, and the environment.

Advisory Council Member Terms

The commitment to serve on the *BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity* Advisory Council includes the following elements:

- 12 month term, beginning in September 2012 and concluding in September 2013.

- 7 Advisory Council meetings planned (September, October, December, January, February, May and August).
- Each Advisory Council meeting will be for approximately 2 hours, with 2-3 hours preparation time expected to review draft materials.
- Participation in 1 or 2 regional summits and the provincial summit as panel members, possibly in speaker roles on voluntary basis.
- Key purpose is to undertake the confidential review of draft policy and communications materials and participate in interactive discussions with other Advisory Council members using Chatham house rules.
- Council members will not be required to endorse policy positions found in the materials; however, the commitment to sit on the Advisory Council includes agreement to discuss a public commentary/position of the Advisory Council based on a super-majority of members, with ability to abstain or have contrary opinions noted and registered.
- Advisory Council members may be asked, on a voluntary and pre-approved basis, for quotes, video or written commentary for public dissemination detailing Advisory Council commentary and activities.

Compensation/Travel Costs

- The positions on the Advisory Council are voluntary.
- Travel costs will be covered for Council members outside the Lower Mainland.
- Travel costs for the regional and provincial summits will be covered.

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