A Living Document

Robson-Canoe Valleys Economic Opportunities Plan

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

Project Objective

The Canadian economy is experiencing rapid and far-reaching structural changes, and many communities are struggling to understand how best to position themselves for success in the emerging economic environment. The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (Robson-Canoe Valleys more specifically) has chosen this time to proactively examine its current and future economic opportunities and positioning, and to develop an action-oriented approach to building an economic development action plan that is realistic, tangible, and ready to be implemented by the community.

At the same time, the fundamental changes occurring in the local, national and global economies demand that the approach taken in developing any new strategy be different from those of the past. Robson-Canoe Valleys must build upon existing strengths to position the area at the leading edge of the new economy, identifying and capitalizing upon new opportunities and not just relying on yesterday's successes.

Under the terms of the Regional District's Request for Proposal (RFP) for this project, the primary objective of the initiative is the creation of an economic development opportunities plan that will articulate key priorities and identify optimal areas of activity.

Background Research

To understand the context within which the economic development activity must occur, the project team carried out a range of research activities examining demographic and economic processes underway within the Valleys and the overall Fraser-Fort George Region. This research builds on a number of studies completed throughout the region such as the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Strategic Priorities 2009-2012, the McBride 2010-2015 Economic Action Plan and the Valemount Community Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2007. In addition, a review of relevant background documents, reports and data sources was conducted. Together, these elements allowed the research team to gain a more detailed understanding of Robson-Canoe Valleys' primary areas of opportunity and action moving forward.

At the same time, to ensure that local insight and local perspective informed the research process, the project team engaged in a comprehensive consultation process - over 50 people participated. The consultation included in-person and telephone stakeholder interviews as well as focus group sessions which resulted in a high level SWOT analysis which provided strategic direction to the action plan.

Much of this research is synthesized and compiled in order to deliver a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats assessment of the internal and external competitive factors affecting Robson-Canoe Valleys in the coming years. A Competitive Advantages and Disadvantages summary is also constructed on the basis of these factors.

Defining Economic Development Priorities

The selection of sector targets is rooted in the philosophy that initiatives must ultimately increase the total wealth within a community. There are two main ways to do this:

1. **Export Development** – any initiative that brings new money into the community:
   a. Starting or attracting a new business that sells products outside the community
   b. Attracting visitors who then buy local products and services
   c. Encouraging existing businesses to sell their products and services outside of the community.

2. **Import Substitution** – any initiative that keeps money in the community:
   a. Encourage people and businesses to buy their goods and services locally rather than importing them from another community
   b. Starting or attracting new businesses that recognize the leakage and provide a product or service to stop it.

This concept is profiled in the following figure.

Figure 1: Economic Drivers and Redistributors for Robson-Canoe Valleys

Economic drivers bring in the wealth.

Economic redistributors circulate the money within a community.

Strong economies bring in new money and then keep it in the community as it moves from business to business.

The highest priority initiatives are those that directly increase wealth (e.g. the retention or attraction of an economic driving export-oriented business).

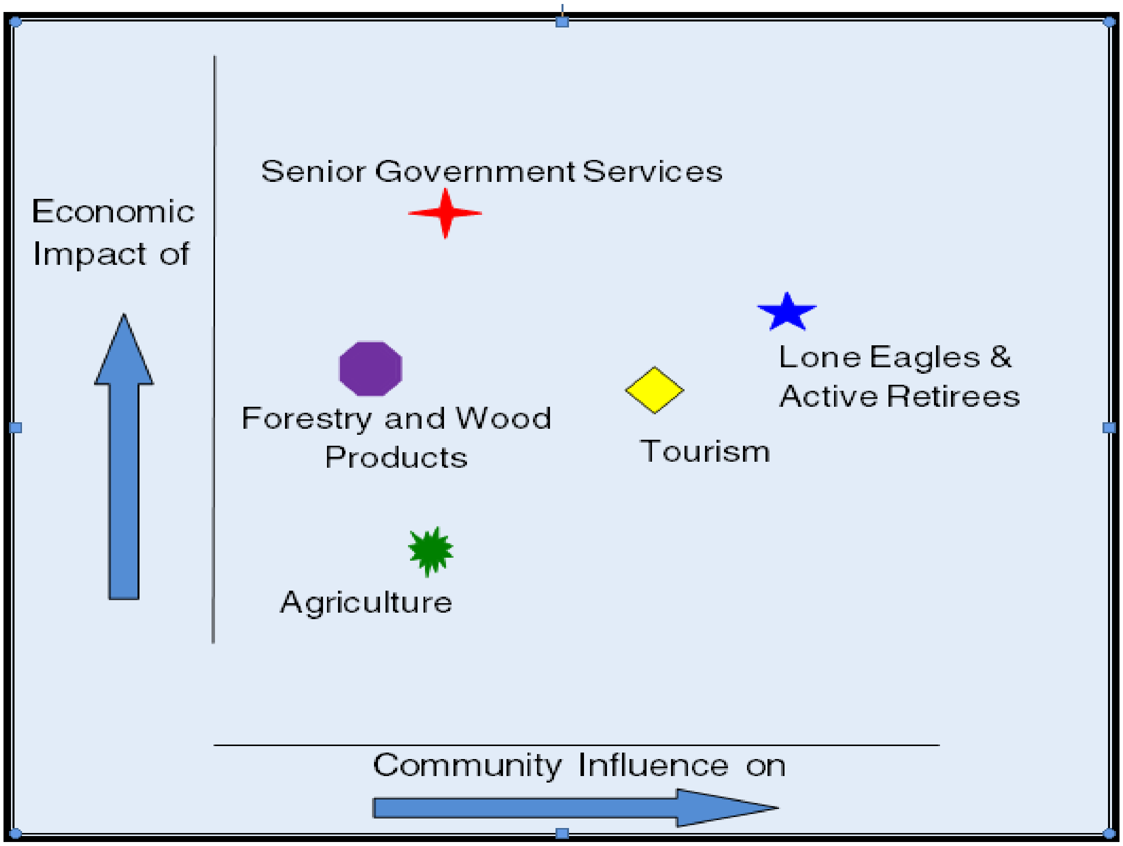
The following target sectors are recommended as top priorities:

Figure 2: Top Priorities for Robson-Canoe Valleys

Downstream Region	Upstream Region
• Lone Eagles (independent business people) • Senior Government Services • Forestry and Wood Products • Tourism • Agriculture	• Lone Eagles (independent business people) • Tourism • Senior Government Services • Forestry and Wood Products • Agriculture

These opportunities put focus on the communities' current core strengths and maximize use of underutilized assets. It also gives aim to new directions that have the potential to shape the community for decades to come.

Figure 3: "Economic Impact of" and "Community Influence on" Likely Investment and Job Creation Opportunities



Action Plans
Based on the research process, the project team developed a series of economic development actions for Robson-Canoe Valleys. In total, 30 actions items are suggested in support of the five target areas identified above.

Incorporated in these action items are specific directions that are suggested for improving the overall investment fundamentals of Robson-Canoe Valleys' economy. A public relations strategy is geared at marketing the region as a whole and increasing recognition and credibility is also presented.

The Action Plans took a five-year approach with achievable short - medium - long term goals to encourage the prospect of an ongoing commitment. With limited dollars and people to carry out the mandate it is very important to remain focused and pursue partnerships. A number of suggestions are included as ways in which the communities within the Valleys could collaborate and avoid duplication of efforts.

Action Plan #1: Lone Eagles and Active Retirees Sector
The overall approach in the Lone Eagles and Active Retirees Sector is "*We're ready, let's go out and get the investment".* The heaviest emphasis for this sector is in the public relations and internet/website strategies.

1. Investment Readiness
    a. Conduct an annual survey of Lone Eagle establishments and entrepreneurs to understand the current context and needs of this flourishing sector of the economy.
    b. Incorporate or update the needs and priorities of this sector into various municipal documents, including the integration into official plans and economic development strategic plans. Further to this point, engage Planning to bring creative sector and creative economy issues and policy considerations into land use and other areas of municipal planning.
2. Investment Attraction
    a. Undertake a marketing and branding strategy that includes a portfolio of local Lone Eagle success stories and testimonials to be used in a community profile and other promotional efforts.
    b. Continue to enhance the municipal website as the main investment attraction tool. Use examples from Prince Edward County's www.buildanewlife.ca as a baseline.
    c. The most likely future investors are those who have previous ties to the community. Consistently distribute information to this group and involve them in the community's existing and expanded social media campaigns.
    d. Work with media to promote success stories of young persons who have chosen to make their homes/careers in the area.

Action Plan #2: Tourism and Culture Sector

The key message for this sector in Robson-Canoe Valleys is that product development needs to continue but not at the expense of promotions - there is enough already to be excited about. More focus will be needed n the specific products and promotional materials delivered by the community.

1. Product Development & Investment Readiness
    a. Continued development of snowmobiling industry.
    b. Development of motorized trail use in the summer months – this has to be done carefully as government regulations are very restrictive on the use of motorized vehicles in wilderness area – nonetheless it is a significant opportunity with many inquiries to VARDA and an opportunity to fill the summer tourism void.
    c. Product development is needed in the Ancient Forest and the Walker Rainforest Wilderness Forest in the Crescent Spur area. They need assistance to have the area 'protected'.
    d. Support the 5 year Cultural Plan to develop cultural and community programs and attractions to support tourism.
    e. Agri-tourism opportunities in Dunster/McBride area should be pursued.
    f. Investigate the possibility of tourism opportunities from the hot springs in the Valemount area.
    g. Maintain and enhance existing hiking trails to ensure maximum enjoyment and safety.

Action Plan #3: Forestry and Wood Products Action Plan

The overall approach for this sector involves local operators adjusting successfully to new economic realities. Progress must continue to be made one operator at a time with the addition of pursuing a new community wide value-added and bio-energy project.

1. Investment Readiness
    a. There is an essential need for a regional "Forestry Success Strategy" in an effort to establish some consensus on the best ways to move forward. Currently efforts are very isolated.
    b. Establish a Forestry Industry Resources Centre that is fashioned after the Dunedin Research Support Fund described below. On the retention side the main goal is to expose existing manufacturers to alternative opportunities and how investments in technology can positively affect their business. The Centre will assist with accessing funding to write innovative business plans.
2. Investment Attraction
    a. Capitalize on the provincial and federal governments' plans of economic stimulus through infrastructure projects. Identify long-required but neglected capital projects which can be quickly turned into short-term jobs for those with forestry skills (e.g. utility line clearing, tree planting, recreational trail development (walking, biking, four wheeling, snow machining, waterfront boardwalk maintenance, new road construction)
    b. Use the Forestry Resource Centre concept identified above as a mechanism to conduct feasibility studies and complete business plans for the many value added and residual wood ideas such as wood-to-energy facilities, pelletizing operations, etc.

Action Plan #4: Senior Government Services Sector

The focus in this sector is on retention. Attraction should be aimed at health care services and opportunities that present themselves such as a Federal Prison.

1. Retention and Expansion
    a. There is heavy emphasis on this initiative for the Government Services sector. **Complete visits with all local senior government services.** A two headed approach is required – economic development staff speaking at the staff level and political representatives (e.g. Mayor, Regional Director, Council) speaking at a political level.
2. Investment Attraction
    a. The heaviest push should be on identifying opportunities for health services such as additional hospital care and long term care for the aged as mentioned within the main text. Campaigns that emphasize face-to-face meetings with government staff (by local staff) and MPs and MLAs (by local politicians) need to be developed. A common front with all parts of the community working together on the initiative is essential.
    b. Concentrate resources on **identifying opportunities in the non-government organization sector** such as social and health organizations that need space for regional offices. Tap into the community's network of people participating in Boards of Directors. These are excellent sources of knowledge and administrative jobs which helps with Lone Eagle spousal employment.

Action Plan #5: Agriculture Sector

The focus for this sector is on local collaboration in developing the product. This sector has a long history in Robson-Canoe Valleys and a focus should be placed on identifying investment attraction initiatives and the marketing and promotion of this resilient sector.

1. Product Development
    a. Organize a 'trade team' to visit communities that have developed value added agriculture economies. Include local food processors, farmers and CFDC. Arrange a follow up where product developers visit the region to work with local people to develop new products.
    b. Expand local production and access to local food through the development of farm gate sales, farmers markets and a more robust food distribution network.
    c. Liaise with local institutions such as schools, municipal offices and hospitals to local farmers and buy local products for their facilities.
    d. Evaluate the municipal by-laws and food support programs and make adjustments to grow home-based and farm-based small business in this sector.
2. Workforce Development
    a. Build a cooperative program with local schools to grow interest in youth in the areas of food production, processing, marketing/retailing and distribution.
    b. Enhance and encourage local trades training programs in culinary arts and artisan cheese and meat preparation.
3. Government Process
    a. Advocate to provincial and federal regulators the inflexible regulations that threaten small value added agricultural operations.
4. Investment Attraction/Development

a. Assemble a value added agriculture sub-committee. Identify source funds for agri-food investment.

5. Marketing and Promotions
    a. Continue to develop marketing campaigns that put the region on the food map. Include websites, in store displays in targeted markets, local advertising in targeted markets, etc.
    b. Promote the agriculture and agri-food success stories that make the region resilient to changes in the sector.

Working Together

The communities in Robson-Canoe Valleys have indicated an interest in working together towards common goals. The report also makes the following recommendations of high quality options where a partnership makes success more possible because of the increased human and financial resources, the increased ability to apply for senior government or other sources of funding or the combination of the two communities brings economies of scale for assets needed to be successful.

1. Tourism – While the two areas are somewhat different when it comes to the product they offer there are some areas that they can jointly promote in order to get people moving from one area to the other. These areas could include trails, heli-skiing, snowmobiling and other activities such as hunting and fishing.
2. Infrastructure – Cooperation is possible on working with government on infrastructure issues including telecommunications, hydro, highways, broadband, etc. A Regional Infrastructure Needs and Benefits Study could be conducted for the region that would look at the quality of the infrastructure and its viability for the next 20 years. This study could examine land available for residential/commercial development, emergency services, water treatment facilities, transportation linkages, etc.
3. Business – There is a need for business support programs and skill development education in all areas of FFG. Community Futures is another obvious partner.
4. Forestry – There is commonality with the Community Forests as well as opportunities in the areas of bio-energy and value added. If one community is producing woodchips, then another may partner in producing bio-oil. The bio-oil company could then produce resin that could be used to build composites.
5. Forestry – Leaders from each community should form a joint committee to meet with the British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range to discuss opportunities in the forestry sector.
6. Seniors Services – Since government is not going to support duplication of services, they would be wise to develop a rotational program for specialists and support for diagnostic services in McBride at the hospital. Home care services and extended care facilities are needed in both towns.
7. Land Development – To cooperate on style and features of the development of industrial park land to compliment the marketing efforts for business growth throughout the region.
8. Government Services – There are opportunities to support each other, rather than compete, for regional services and educational program delivery.
9. Agriculture – They could all lobby for less restrictive regulations regarding farm gating and farmers markets – also the abattoir issue. Continue to collaborate in hosting farmers markets showcasing the agricultural products of the region.
10. Lone Eagle Marketing – This is a significant area of potential cooperate as both communities are desperately in need of increased population and more permanent residents. They can equally

promote their quality of life, cultural assets and of course the recreational/nature amenities that are available in all areas. This could include the production of a promotional video or donation of helicopter time (sponsored by communities or businesses or donated by a local helicopter company). Local leaders could be a part of showing the videographer the 'sweet spots' in the communities. Website development is an important component to this promotion as well. Ensure that there is a dedicated person who is responsible for updates and improvements.

11. Economic Gardening (Business Retention and Expansion) – Develop a program in partnership with Fraser-Fort George Community Futures, New Caledonia College, UNBC and other organizations to complete Economic Gardening projects on an annual basis. There may be individuals in the community who have a vision, but are not sure how to make it a reality. This initiative could allow 1-2 people to be hired to spend time in all communities and meeting with existing businesses.
12. Skills Development – Work with local colleges to hold a computer literacy course for residents of the area. This would allow for people to learn the basic skills of a computer, and in turn would increase the business success in the region.

Conclusion

The strategy and action plan provides Robson-Canoe Valleys with a clear understanding of the direction that, properly resourced, can help the communities achieve their desired objectives. It delivers clear action items that are achievable, tangible and deliverable for the area, which are aligned with the target sectors for investment attraction and retention that Robson-Canoe Valleys is best positioned to capitalize on in the project timeframe.

Most of all, this strategy will assist Robson-Canoe Valleys in enhancing its reputation as a proactive community ready to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century economy. Recognizing that many rural communities are competing for investment on a provincial, national and global scale, Robson-Canoe Valleys must demonstrate a willingness to pursue partnerships for funding and investment retention and attraction, while remaining on the leading edge of economic development activities.

With attention on key initiatives and guiding principles outlined in this strategy, Robson-Canoe Valleys will strengthen its economy and remain healthy into the next decade.

2 Introduction

It is a challenge to define and capture all the facets of economic development. It is usually described either in terms of objectives such as employment creation, wealth generation or as a process that tries to shape and encourage growth, competitiveness, sustainability and the overall economic well-being of a community.

What is most common amongst all definitions is the implied and, in some cases, explicitly recognized, role of government, as it is significantly responsible for creating the environment in which economic development occurs. Economic development has traditionally involved enhancing the factors of productive capacity – land, labour, capital and technology – of a national, provincial or local economy. Increasingly, a fifth factor of production – knowledge or innovation – is recognized as well.

Importantly, because a consensus definition for economic development does not exist, there is no single strategy, policy or program direction for achieving success. The unique mix of geographic, political, economic and social attributes of a community will present a distinctive set of challenges, and requires different solutions, for economic development to be successful.

2.1 The Purpose: Why Develop an Economic Opportunities Plan?

The Robson-Canoe Valleys Economic Development Opportunities Plan describes a roadmap for the District and its partners (private, non-profit, public sector) illustrating how they can work together to enhance employment and investment opportunities that will benefit the entire region. The plan is based on the premise that the region can develop local visions and goals of what it wants to become, determine the sector in which it has the best chance of being successful and apply resources to achieve them. If done systematically and over the long-term, the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George can enhance its economic base while maintaining its core values and improving personal quality of life.

For the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, there are a number of motivating factors and goals for this Economic Development Opportunities Plan. They include:

- Identification of the best matches for targeted business attraction efforts and enhancement of traditional and non-traditional sectors including forestry, tourism and agriculture
- Analysis of existing and future industrial and commercial land banks to meet the demands of new economic growth
- Analysis of the area's hydro electricity and telecommunications system and its issues that will affect future growth
- Identification of any issues affecting the lives of seniors in the area and the growth of the active retiree's market.

In reality, the District is continuously making decisions that affect economic development. The most obvious ways in which economic development is influenced by local governments are through decisions on land use and property taxation, but there are many other ways in which economic development can also be either positively or negatively affected. Examples include the working relationship between local government and the business community, the cost and time required to move through municipal review and approval processes and the effort made to understand and respond to the needs of business.

Economic development is about more than attracting companies and investments to a community. These opportunities are part of stimulating growth, but they should not be pursued at the expense of overlooking the needs of the community and existing businesses. In fact, research from numerous sources shows that existing businesses create 60%-90% of all new economic growth in a community[1]. Smaller communities, not unlike those in the Fraser-Fort George area, tend to sit in the higher part of the above range because they are more challenged than larger urban centres in attracting new inward investment.

2.2 The Process: How was the Plan Developed?

Strategic planning is a means for establishing and maintaining effective programs based on economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities and constraints. It also:

- Helps to shape a community's future
- Provides structure for mutually accepted goals and a common agenda
- Defines the purpose of the community at large and its role in achieving stated goals
- Balances community goals with realistic local resources.

A cornerstone to developing this strategy and action plan is developing an understanding of the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George in terms of its existing assets and its potential. The methodology that was carried out helped the project team to gain a stronger understanding of the local situation.

Project Study Team

This project was overseen by a project team with the project management from Community and Development Services from the Regional District office. They provided insight into local initiatives, opportunities and barriers. During one-on-one meetings with Council members, they offered input and suggestions to the work plan, strategy for public consultation and feedback on interim findings reports.

Community Input

Further consideration in regards to vision, desired directions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and solutions was offered through the opinions and thoughts of the District's citizens and business leaders. These individuals provided an excellent source of current information as it relates to the region's strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that may be confronting its economic base. Of particular consideration was the identification of any critical issues that must be addressed to facilitate partnerships and carry through with implementation.

Input was collected through one-on-one interviews, group meetings and focus groups. See Section Appendix A for the participant list and Section 3 for a summary of their input.

Background Review and Reconnaissance

A comprehensive review of available background literature and studies provided the project team with a strong understanding of the current socio-economic conditions in the individual municipalities and region.

In developing this plan, an important consideration was the city's relative competitive position or distinction in British Columbia as well as that of the broader provincial and national economy.

[1] Examples of this research include The Ohio State University (2002); North Dakota Department of Commerce (2001); University of Illinois (2004).

2.3 The Accomplishments: How will the Strategy and Plan be Implemented?

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George is the major vehicle through which this plan should be implemented. In some cases, they will be responsible for directly implementing the initiatives presented here; in others their role will be to work with and coordinate amongst local municipalities, partner agencies and organizations to ensure that the initiatives are put in place. Possible roles include:

- Leader – initiating the partnership and taking primary responsibility for implementing it
- Facilitator – initiating the partnership and taking a lesser to no role in implementation
- Supporter – reacting to a partnership invitation and contributing time and/or money towards implementation

Within the Action Plan a number of different areas of cooperation between the communities of Robson-Canoe Valleys have been suggested.

3 Situational Analysis

A cornerstone to developing an economic development strategy is an understanding of a community or region in terms of its economic assets - business base, labour force, quality of life, etc. - as well as its potential. The discussion that follows provides a look at current and historical data that has brought the Robson-Canoe Valleys to where it is today. In determining the direction that the Robson-Canoe Valleys will take in the future it is essential that we examine the factors that have influenced these changes and understand how they will shape the future.

3.1 Stakeholder Engagement

In order to base the project's recommendations on new, innovative and Robson-Canoe Valleys-specific knowledge and local realities, an extensive stakeholder consultation process was undertaken. This process of stakeholder consultation is meant to ground our findings and theories in the opinions and thoughts of residents, business operators and community leaders already present in the area or have an intimate knowledge of the area and its character. These stakeholders are critical to the process and are able to provide excellent information on the area's strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that may be confronting its economic potential. Also identified in the process are 'critical' issues that must be addressed in order to facilitate and foster growth. This process included in-person and telephone stakeholder interviews as well as focus group sessions resulting in a high level SWOT analysis which will lead to determining a strategic direction.

In total more than 50 people were involved in individual stakeholder interviews and focus group sessions in all areas of the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George. A list of participants is included in Appendix A.

The following are 'theme' areas that emerged throughout all discussions including points brought forward by stakeholders, observations and opportunities:

1. Tourism
2. Business Development
3. Senior Services
4. Agriculture
5. Forestry
6. Municipal Services
7. Future Goals and Visions

Tourism

- Area is a destination for snowmobilers – season is November to April – this is a strong economic generator. Unlike many areas of the country, the summer months are slower seasons.
- There are possibilities for ATV use in the summer months.
- Heli-skiing is a popular winter sport – there are four companies in the area providing this service.
- Ancient forests have tourism possibilities.
- Strong natural features with the mountains; good location in proximity to Mount Robson and Jasper; most of the tourists are from the Alberta area – 80% are from Edmonton area.
- Area is getting well known for hiking.
- The area needs more activities for children.

- Canoe Mountain Gondola was a project that held some promise but did not proceed at that time. The proponent is now proposing a 'ZipLine' development in the same location which would be a major tourism draw, particularly in the summer months when more recreational activity is desired.
- Area has a pristine and unspoiled environment with breathtaking mountain views.
- In 1999, Valemount was designated as BC's Northern Gateway under the Park and Backcountry Gateways Program.
- The area lacks a year round lake area – present waterway is a reservoir that is dry at the northern end during a large part of the year.

- Activities in the park areas include white water rafting, ATVing, hiking, birding; parks also have learning experiences i.e. bear awareness, moose programs, etc.
- The park areas would be willing to take brochures of the Valemount area if available.
- There seems to be a general lack of awareness of the area in the tourism marketplace – opportunities for increased marketing in target areas.
- Length of hotel stays is increasing, especially in Valemount; have already increased from 1 to 2 nights over the past two years.
- Businesses close early leaving the tourists with nothing to do/nowhere to go after 5:00 p.m.
- Outdoor tourism courses offered at campus of College of New Caledonia; original plans were for teaching lodge but due to a lack of funding the program will be offered every second year – NORE Program.
- Hot springs in Valemount area have tourism and geothermal energy possibilities.
- Dunster has a strong arts community as well as popular markets and community events.

- There is a variety of origins of tourists in the area – Germany, France, Italy, England, and Asia (Korea especially).Two previous studies were completed on a ski hill development for Valemount (1995 Jack Johnson Co. – A Masterplan for a Ski-Hill Development, and 1998 Egosign Mountain Resort Planners - Feasibility Study for a Ski Hill). Recommendations were for a large scale development as the regional market is too small to support it.
- Rafting is becoming popular on the Fraser River from Mount Robson to Tete Jaune; white water rafting and gentle rafting.
- Crescent Spur has outdoor adventure and eco tourism opportunities but is in need of product development advice.
- More directional and event signage is needed throughout the area.
- Walker Rainforest Wilderness is a potential attraction also in need of product development as well as official protection designation status; the Save-the-Cedar League claims that the area is the largest wilderness remaining in the world outside of parks that includes ancient inland rainforest, mountain caribou, salmon, grizzly bear, etc; it is a very unique area in need of protection and careful enhancement.

- The District has 11 regional parks encompassing 330 ha of land including Ness Lake, Berman Lake, Wilkins, Harold Mann, Koeneman, George Hicks, Giscome Portage, Cedarside, McMilan Creek, John Dahl and Kristian Winther which was opened in 2003. There are also several natural areas to enjoy including McBride's Horseshoe Lake Bird Viewing and Valemount's Cranberry Marsh.
- The Region is emerging as a cultural tourism destination with a new five year cultural plan designed to develop and encourage development and awareness.
- The Town of Valemount and Tourism Valemount are presently implementing a new strategic plan which includes a branding process to create its own tourism identity. This branding process includes logo development and recommendations for community branding (banners, etc).

Tourism Summary: The valley is extremely well positioned near national parks and attractions. The greatest tourism potential is in outdoor adventure in the southern areas and eco tourism in the northern areas. Product development and marketing is a priority.

Business Development

- The biggest impediments to future business development are issues with electricity and available industrial land.
- There is a limited skilled and available labour force but numbers of young workers is declining.
- Municipalities in the area have basic retail only due to low population levels.
- The loss of the mills created a significant job loss; communities are now focussed on smaller businesses to replace these job losses.
- There is a lack of an industrial tax base in Valemount and McBride.
- Some residents are entrepreneurial but lack the business skills – there is an opportunity for training and skills development seminars; in general there is a historic dependence on major employers.
- CFDC is limited by a lack of awareness and lack of participation by locals – more promotion of services and programs tailored to local needs can assist would-be entrepreneurs.
- Financing for new business development is a struggle in the area due to the economy and low population base.
- Saas Fee project holds some promise if it proceeds in Valemount – condos, boutique retail.

- Mining possibilities south of Valemount – Tantalum.
- The area is attracting more and more people from various ethnic and business backgrounds – this is a source of information and local talent wealth.
- Tete Jaune has opportunities in lodging and services for the Mount Robson Park area.
- There are possible benefits from a mentorship program to assist new businesses.
- There is a need to recruit professional type of businesses i.e. web designers, accountants etc.
- Crescent Spur is an area eager to attract creative sector businesses.
- There is a growing 'second home' segment of the population in the valley which is not embraced by local people due to their seasonality. These residents are a potential source of full-time

residents, business owners and business support talent and consideration should be given to exploring welcoming new residents to the area.

Business Development Summary: Losses in the logging sector has changed the economy in the valley. There is a growing desire for small-medium sized businesses in the professional and creative industry sectors to provide employment and sustainable community services. Training is needed to support a growing entrepreneurial base and future business growth will depend on the ability of the area to resolve its hydro and telecommunications issues.

Senior Services

- McBride and Valemount have recently received approval for 10 more seniors housing units each.
- There are physicians to serve the area and a hospital in McBride and medical clinic in Valemount.
- There is a lack of extended care units and extended home care services; McBride has extended care services in their hospital; extended home care would encourage residents to stay in their homes longer and remain as part of the community.
- The valley area has an aging population.
- An outreach program is necessary to provide services such as physiotherapy, massage, etc.
- Seniors services include Meals on Wheels, some home care, planned tours, pharmacy, available physicians and social activities.

Senior Services Summary: Recent approval for 20 new housing units in McBride and Valemount has alleviated an urgent need for housing. Reasonable senior's services are available throughout the valley with the exception of extended home care services and lodging as well as some speciality services. While there is not a crisis at this time, careful monitoring has to take place to deal with changing future needs of an aging population.

Agriculture

- Co-ops assist in marketing and bulk purchasing – there may be possibilities to extend this practice to the purchase of larger pieces of equipment.
- Possibilities exist for funding of greenhouses.
- Lack of abattoirs in the area increases transportation costs and causes distribution issues.
- Opportunities for blueberry farming exist – there is a need for a feasibility study and business planning.
- The McBride area including Crescent Spur and Dunster, have farmland with the greatest agricultural opportunities.
- Self-employed farmers are the largest employers in Dunster area.

- Food inspection regulations are causing hardships to the farmer's markets in Dunster from July – September.
- An opportunity exists to build a brand around local food and beverage products that could enhance tourism, resident and business attraction activities.

Agriculture Summary: There is excellent agriculture land throughout the central and northern areas of the valley and several farm operations that have evolved into sustainable holdings. This industry is a stabilizer to offset employment losses in the forestry industry and promote community pride. Discussion is needed regarding regulations surrounding the marketing and distribution of farm products, including livestock. The development of a strong local brand can help existing farmers get more return from their existing production and assist new businesses to enter the market.

Forestry

- Mills in Valemount and McBride have closed in recent years taking reasonably high paying jobs with them. Closures have taken place due to changes in regulations regarding processing of raw lumber and globalization.
- The McBride Community Forest has provided much needed access to fibre and has facilitated small business in the forestry sectors.
- There are bio energy opportunities due to available resources.
- Possibilities exist for manufacturing opportunities that are compatible with natural resources (e.g. manufacture of canoes, paddles, snowshoes, packaged log homes, etc.). Wood for making musical instruments – tone wood – available in the area.
- Tete Jaune has a working sawmill – Hauer Brothers – only working sawmill in the region employs 15 people and specializes in square lumber with markets in eastern Canada.
- Opportunities for value added products (e.g. pellets).

Forestry Summary: Significant job losses were the result of sawmill closures in recent years. Community Forests have replaced, to some degree, the logging potential of the valley and have encouraged entrepreneurial activity which might have not otherwise taken place. There are further opportunities with the Community Forests as well as opportunities in manufacturing and value added innovations through the utilization of forest fibre and existing stands of unique timber.

Government Services & Infrastructure

- Although vastly improved in recent years there are still areas with very limited broadband and cellular service; some areas such as Crescent Spur have particular concerns with cellular service.
- Electrical service is inconsistent and is an issue of study; the area is in need of a secure source of power.
- McBride and Valemount have a range of community facilities including schools, recreation areas, museums, tourism centres; Dunster school is slated to close due to efforts to realize efficiencies in the delivery of education services.
- Tax base is small and funds are not available for infrastructure improvements.
- There has been a recent proposal for a prison in Valemount which is meeting with mixed acceptance.
- The Councils of McBride and Valemount get together once or twice a year to exchange ideas and discuss issues of mutual concern.
- Valemount airport is in need of upgrading to the runways and structures – some possibilities exist for fly-in tourism.

- Highway improvements are important to service potential tourism and business traffic.
- Residential attraction is important to grow the population as well as balance the price of housing in the area.
- Housing prices are overinflated due to activity of second home purchasers and low level speculation.
- Tete Jaune has had issues in the past with availability of water in the area of the Community Centre, however a recently completed well should alleviate this problem.
- The McBride Wastewater Project, jointly funded by the Federal and Provincial Government, is being developed to create an eco-sensitive solution to wastewater. The environmental component will see the discharged water used to create a shallow lake and wetlands for wildlife. A visitor shop, wildlife viewing center and a possible boat launch has been approved for Phase 3 of the project.

Municipal Services and Issues Summary: Communities in the valley have most essential services that they need and, on the whole, do not aspire to be larger centres that are serviced by mass retail and big box stores and services. The tax base is small which has limited the potential of funds that can be allocated to municipal infrastructure. This fact as well as improvements needed to electricity and telecommunications service will be a challenge to future community growth. Partnerships will be essential in the future.

Future Goals and Visions

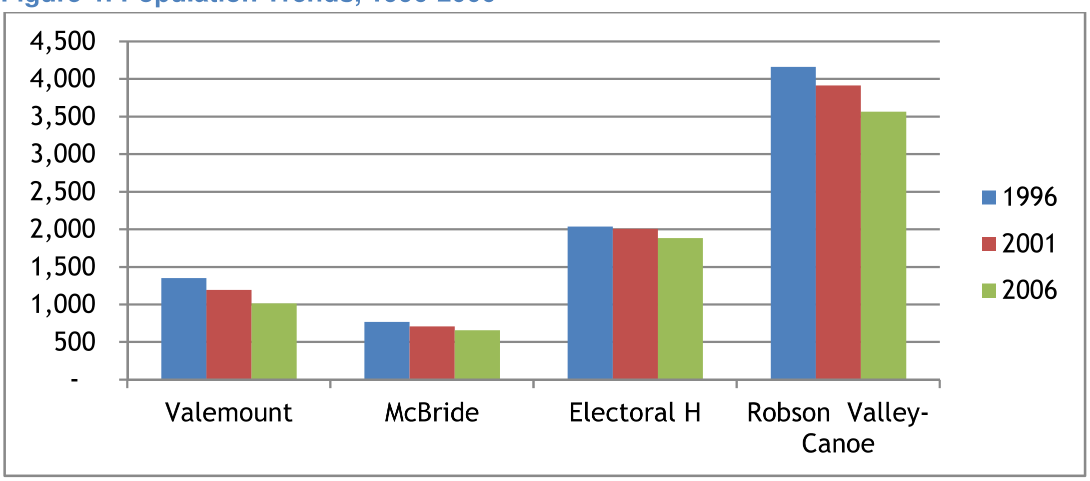
- A good place to work, live and raise a family.

- An area with year round recreation that is known for its outdoor amenities and not its industry.
- To have an increase in population with controlled growth and new business opportunities.
- Strong local government who will ensure that infrastructure is in place for future growth.
- Superior quality of life.
- Smart growth keeping environment in mind – clean water and mountains.
- "I want to tell people where I live and they know where that is!".
- A place that is good for seniors to live with good amenities and a comfortable lifestyle.
- Maintain a small town atmosphere – not overdeveloped.

Future Goals and Visions Summary: Stakeholders want their community to grow (only somewhat) and maintain its pristine quality of life while having employment for young families and services for all residents including the elderly.

3.2 Regional Demographic and Economic Profile

Figure 4: Population Trends, 1996-2006



Statistics Canada. 2006, 2002. 2001 Community Profiles.

Population trends show that the population is decreasing in all communities within Robson-Canoe Valleys between 1996 and 2006.

Figure 5: Projected Population Change in Fraser-Fort George

Name	Area	2006	2007	2008	2009	2008-

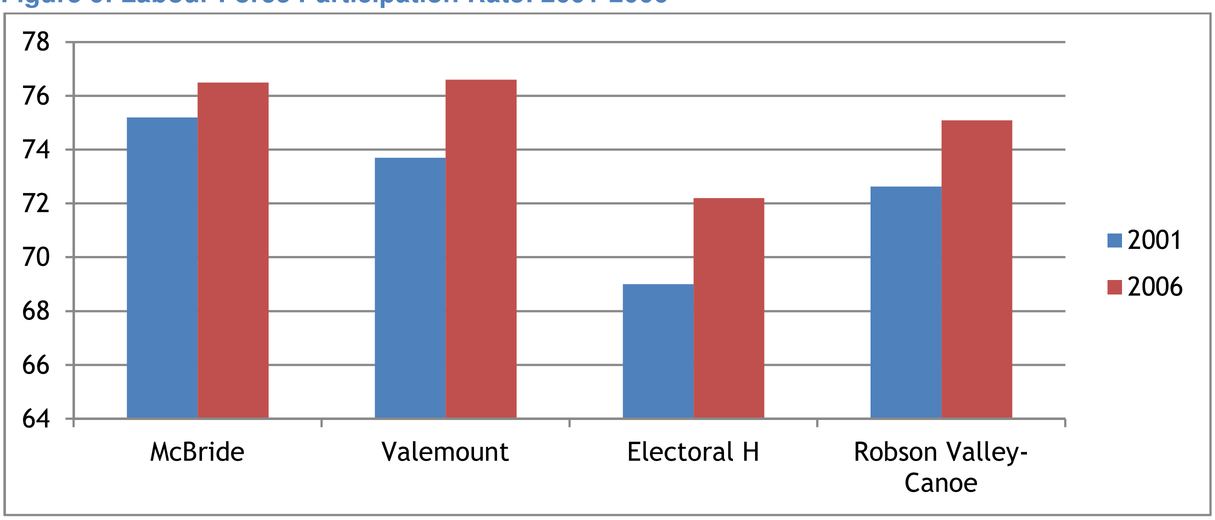
	Type					2009 % Change
Fraser-Fort George	RD	94,415	94911	95,385	95,652	0.3
Mackenzie	DM	4,616	4,534	4,254	3,827	-10.0
McBride	VL	661	659	678	674	-0.6
Prince George	C	72,889	73,340	73,886	74,547	0.9
Valemount	VL	1,018	1,007	1,015	1,044	2.9
Unincorporated Areas	RDR	15,231	15,371	15,552	15,560	0.1

Notes:
RD = Regional District, R = Region, RDR = Regional District Unincorporated Area
C = City, T = Town, VL = Village, DM = District Municipality, IM = Island Municipality, RGM = Regional Municipality, RM = Resort Municipality,

Source: BC Stats. (2009). Business Indicators 2009: British Columbia Sub-Provincial Population Stats

Data above represents the entire Fraser-Fort George region. As is shown, it was projected that the population in McBride would decrease by 0.6%, and would increase in Valemount by 2.9%. These projections were made by the British Columbia Government, and do not represent actual declines or growth.

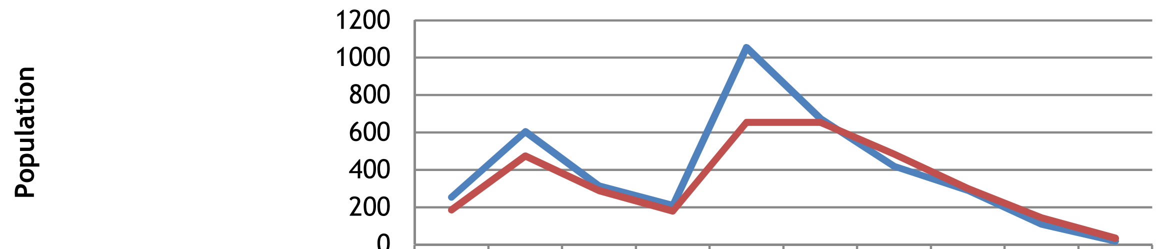
Figure 6: Labour Force Participation Rate: 2001-2006



Statistics Canada.2006, 2002. 2001 Community Profiles

The *labour force participation rate* refers to the percentage of the population aged 15 and over that is active in the labour force. While Figure 4 and Figure 5 show that the population is continually decreasing between 1996 and 2006, it is interesting to see that participation rates have increased. This indicates that those who have remained in the community (or those who have immigrated) are more likely to be working than in previous years.

Figure 7: Age Distribution - Robson-Canoe Valleys, 2001-2006

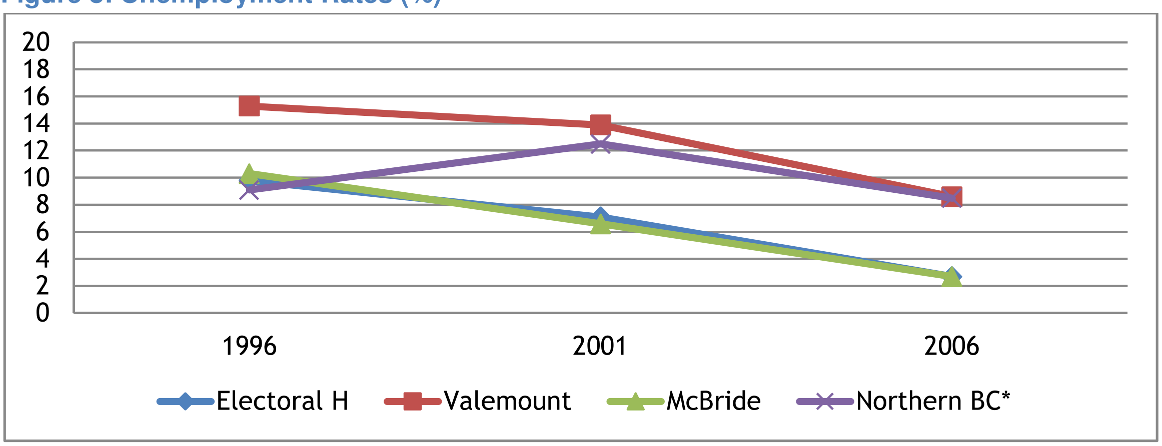


	Age 0-4	Age 5-14	Age 15-19	Age 20-24	Age 25-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65-74	Age 75-84	Age 85 and over
2001 Robson Canoe Valleys	255	605	315	210	1055	675	420	290	110	20
2006 Robson Canoe Valleys	185	475	290	180	655	655	485	300	145	35

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001, 2006.
Note: Unable to compare 1996 due to the data collection method used in this period.

As is shown above, the only age segments to see an increase in population in Robson-Canoe Valleys between 2001 and 2006 are those 55 and over. This increase could be due to natural demographic shifts due to aging (especially movement of the large Baby Boomer segment into the 55+), an influx of people in their late wage earning and retirement years who decide to move from the city to the small town setting or those who want to move from more rural settings to be closer to health care and social services.
A major decrease is seen in the 25-44 age group. This might be attributed to the changing resource industry and the number of workers these industries employ. The work of Dr. Greg Halseth from the University of Northern British Columbia suggests that during this time period, resource companies were continuing to aggressively implement a more "flexible" style of production, which meant larger plants increasing their level of technology use, and needed fewer employees. The loss of population does NOT consider the loss of people who go to Alberta and northeastern British Columbia to work during the week or on 2-3 week shifts in the oil sands and natural gas fields, which through local interviews, was identified as a major concern.

Figure 8: Unemployment Rates (%)



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996-2006 Census Data
* Note: Data for Northern British Columbia collected from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, for June of each year.

As is shown above in Figure 8, the highest rate of unemployment was seen in Valemount in 1996. For 2006, the rate of unemployment for Electoral Area H and McBride were identical (2.7%). The unemployment rate for Northern British Columbia and Valemount in 2006 were also very similar (8.5% and 8.6 respectively). This suggests that the economy of Electoral H and McBride are very closely aligned.

While the unemployment data is not available for the communities of Robson-Canoe Valleys for 2010, Statistics Canada reports that the rate of unemployment in Northern British Columbia in March 2010 was 10.9% -- an increase of 2.4% over the last four years

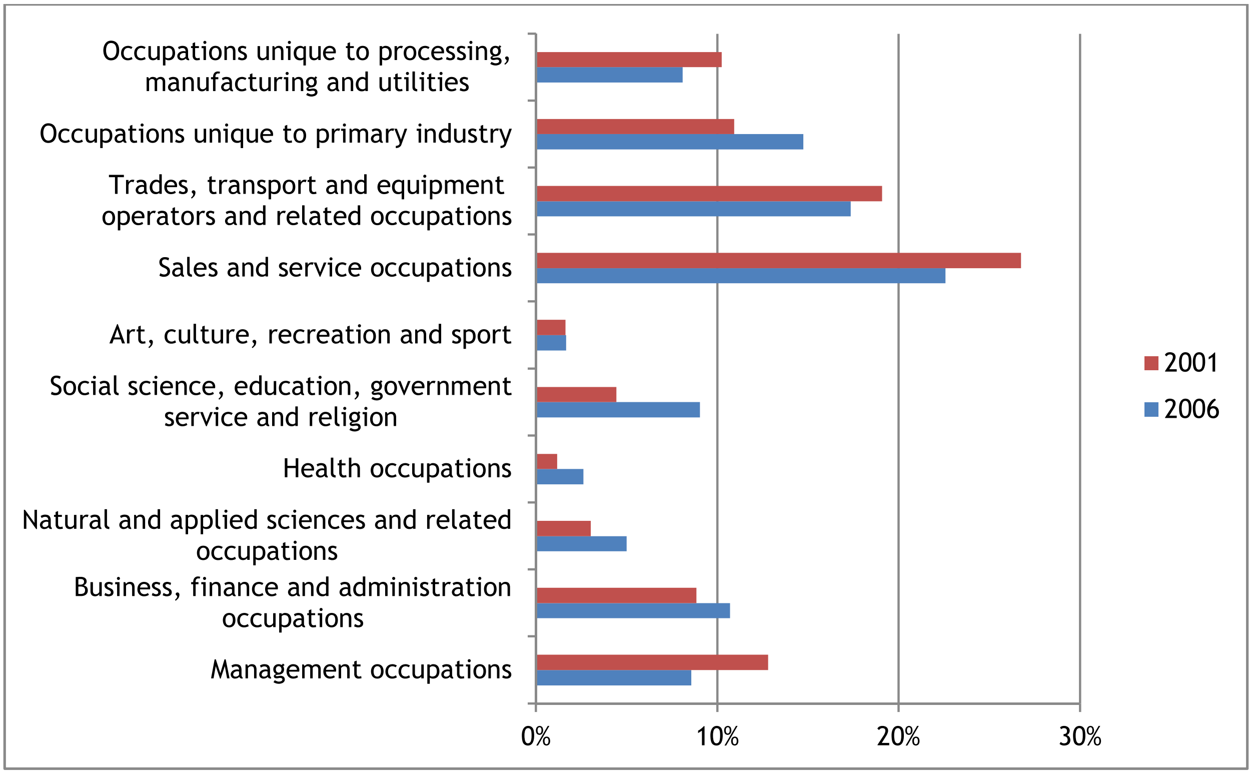
Figure 9: Robson-Canoe Valleys Industry, 2001-06

Robson-Canoe Valleys Industry	2001	2006	% of Total (2001)	% of Total (2006)	% Change
Total-Experienced labour force	2155	2110			
Agriculture and other resource-based industries	280	395	13.0%	18.7%	5.7%
Manufacturing and construction industries	455	360	21.1%	17.0%	-4.1%
Wholesale and retail trade	240	270	11.1%	12.8%	1.7%
Finance and real estate	15	60	0.7%	2.8%	2.1%
Healthcare, social services and education	280	305	13.0%	14.5%	1.5%
Business services	315	245	14.6%	11.6%	3.0%
Other services	565	465	26.2%	22.0%	-4.2%

Note 1: Figures reflect sum of date for Electoral Area H, Valemount, and McBride.
Note 2: For the 2006 Census, a confidentiality procedure is applied by Statistics using a random rounding process to alter the values reported for individual cells. Counts greater than 10 are rounded up or down to a multiple of 5. Counts less than 10 are rounded to either a 0 or a 10. Consequently, the values will not add up to the total labour force population, or 100 %.

- Largest industries: Other services; Agriculture and other resource-based industries; Manufacturing and construction industries
- Greatest growth: Agriculture and other resource-based industries
- Greatest decline: Other services; Manufacturing and construction industries

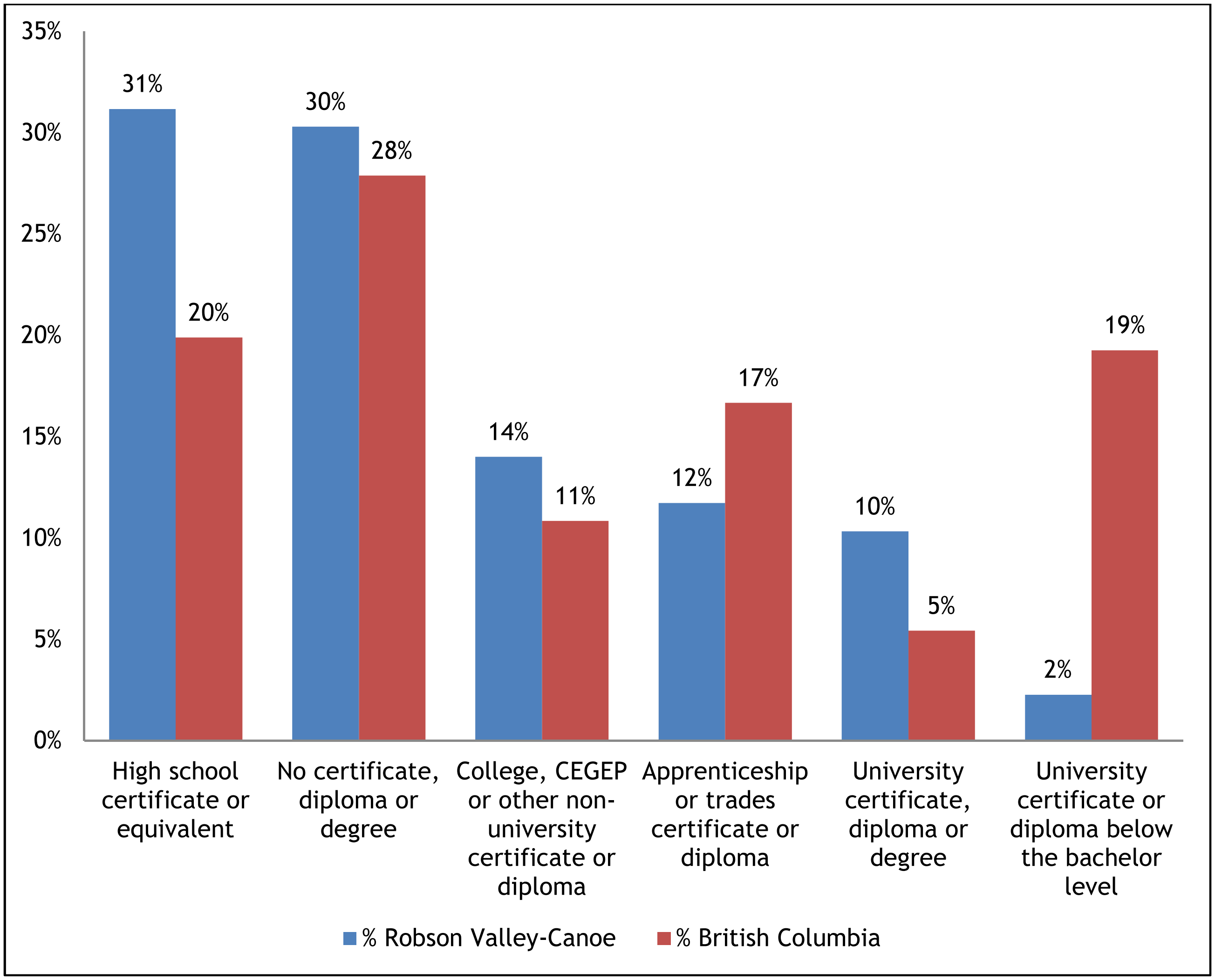
Figure 10: Occupations in Robson-Canoe Valleys, 2001-06 (%)



Source: Statistics Canada Data, 2001-2006.

Figure 10 above, between the period of 2001-2006 the Robson-Canoe Valleys experienced an increase in every occupation. The highest percentage increase was seen in the sales and service occupations, which increased by 20%, followed by increases in Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (16%) and Occupations unique to primary industry (13%).

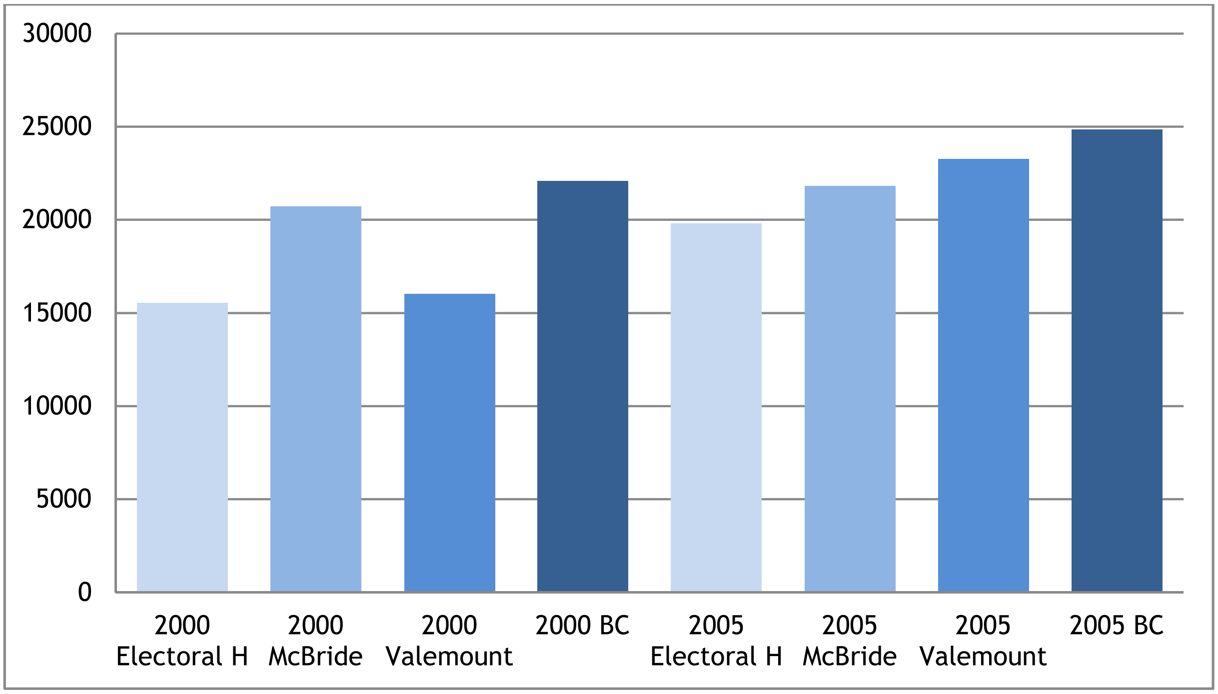
Figure 11: Educational Attainment Age 15+, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Data.

Figure **11** displays that the percentage of persons in the Robson-Canoe Valleys who have only a high school certificate or equivalent is higher than the provincial average. The percentage of those with apprenticeships or trades is lower than the provincial average. However, those with a university certificate, diploma or degree is slightly higher in the Robson-Canoe Valleys as compared to the provincial average. Persons with a high school certificate or equivalent make up the highest educational attainment group in the region (31%).

Figure 12: Median Income-Persons 15 years and over (S)



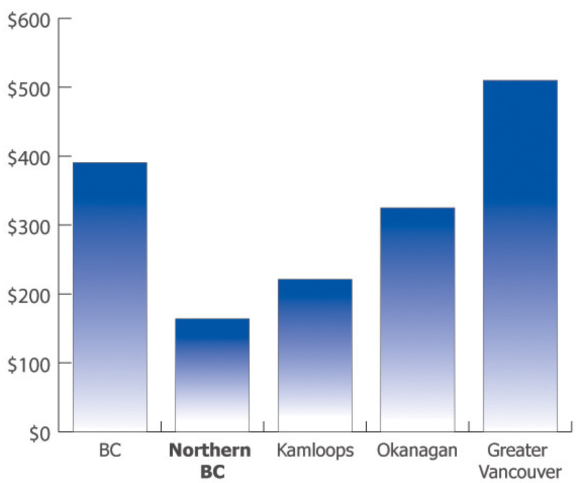
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001-2006 Data

As is shown above the median income for all communities in the Robson-Canoe Valleys is lower than that of the province. This data displays that income has risen slightly all around, and the most significant increase was seen in Valemount, which increased from $16,033 in the year 2000, to $23,269 in 2005.

There is an understanding that the figures above will have changed due to significant job losses causing income levels to have decreased.

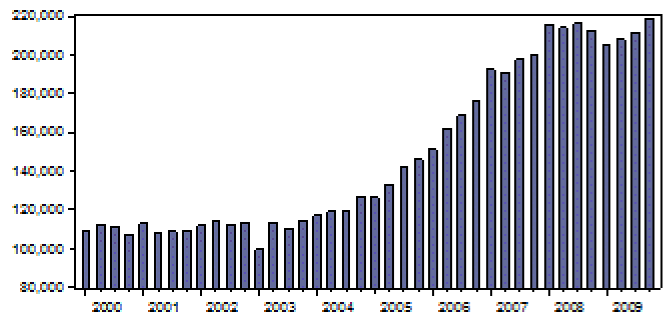
Cost of living can be defined as the cost of maintaining a certain standard of living[2]. Changes in the cost of living over time are often operationalized in a cost of living index. These calculations are made to compare the costs of maintaining a certain standard of living in different geographic areas. While this figure is not available for Robson-Canoe Valleys, a comparison of housing affordability can be one method to gauge the areas cost of living. As is shown below, the average cost of a home in Northern British Columbia is significantly lower than that of other areas, and lower in comparison with the provincial average. While the cost of housing is continually increasing, prices are still nearly 50% of the provincial housing average cost.

Figure 13: Average Residential Sales Price, British Columbia ($) (2006)



Source: British Columbia Real Estate Association (2006)

Figure 14: British Columbia Northern Quarterly Residential Average Price ($)



Source : British Columbia Northern Estates Boards, CREA, BCREA Calculations. (2009)

3.3 Review of Relevant Literature

McBride 2010-2015 Economic Action Plan

The Village of McBride developed an Economic Action Plan for 2010-2015. It is based on goals identified through communication with local residents via survey.

Global financial troubles have affected McBride in the way of decreased jobs, and several business closures. An analysis of the areas strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was completed and offers insight into the current state of the economy.

Strengths of the village include having an economic development officer, are an active community and have built an economic strategy that provides direction and focus. The weaknesses include a lack of industry ready infrastructure (such as stable power and available land), distance from major centre, limited supply of wood fibre, lack of cohesive direction for economic development priorities, lack of

[2] Wikipedia (2010).

funding for new business growth, and wage expectations. In 2006, 31% of workers were dependant on the forestry industry, and 27% on the public sector. In 2009, McBride was identified by BC Stats as being a community that is most vulnerable to the forestry sector.

Major priorities identified in the Action Plan include reliable power and job creation. Supporting a biomass-based energy generation facility is suggested to be the number one priority. Public-recommended initiatives include a community swimming pool, community ski hill and an indoor bowling alley. Other priorities listed in the strategy include a waste water treatment facility, street paving and sidewalk repairs, village loop, branding initiative and a small business incubator project.

Valemount: Community Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory: 2007

Community Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (CEE) reports are a result of multi-agency efforts to provide a province-wide solution to assist local governments in British Columbia to track and report annual community-wide energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A high level energy and GHG emission report is provided which estimates on-road transportation, buildings and solid waste. This information helps local governments plan and implement GHG and energy management strategies while at the same time strengthening broader sustainability planning at the local level. If Robson-Canoe Valleys is interested in building a 'Green Economy' a CEE report will act as a base in an inventory of GHG emissions. Statistics within this report show that on-road transportation produces the highest amount of emissions in Valemount (9,223 tonnes CO_2 or 83.2% of total emissions.)

College of New Caledonia Business Plan

This business plan was developed by the College of New Caledonia (CNC), which is located in Robson-Canoe Valleys. It provides a strategy for the continuation of the Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism (NORE) program and expanded tourism program opportunities. This is made possible through extended tourism programming and the development of partnerships to build a working resort using best practices for environmental sustainability. This resort will not compete with existing accommodations in the area, but will be used to attract students and instructors. Local community support is high and letters of commitments are included in the appendices.

CNC is located in Valemount and offers tourism programs in the form of training, certificate or diploma. Currently, these are the only tourism management and tourism administration programs in Northern British Columbia, which gives Valemount a competitive advantage. This plan proposes to build on the success of the NORE program by developing an Institute for Sustainable Rural Tourism. Rationale for this project is provided throughout this business plan and includes a competitive advantage in location, program design, reputation, and work opportunities for students. Funding sources are identified, as well as an economic impact assessment. Having the college located in Valemount is a major advantage for the area, as tourism has played an increasingly important role in the community's economy over the past fifteen years. The establishment of the College of New Caledonia's Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism program has been key in supporting the goals in the economic development plan which include becoming a region of higher education, and transforming Valemount from a one-industry community to a mixed economy town.

Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Strategic Priorities 2009-2012

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) is home to approximately 100,000 residents who live within four municipalities and seven unincorporated areas (electoral areas). RDFFG implements services where a community has identified a need and provided its support. Each service area in the

RDFFG is intended to be self-funding and those who benefit from a service pay for the service's associated costs.

A 2019 vision of the region is included and focuses on Northern British Columbia, the Corporation, the Region, and the Communities. The Regional vision for 2019 includes 30,000 more residents, being recognized for its heritage, a strong tourism sector and being the most sustainable region in North America. RDFFG aims to be recognized as a progressive educational centre that attracts and retains businesses and employees, and will be one of the most desirable regions to live in.

Six areas of strategic priority were identified by the Regional District Board of Directors in 2009 and includes Solid Waste Management, First Nations Relations, Integrated Community Sustainability Planning, Climate Change, Economic Diversification and Parks and Recreation. Of particular importance to this project, economic diversification included:

- Clearly define the Regional District's role in economic development
- Undertake an assessment of current Regional District services/programs that contribute towards economic development
- Facilitate collaboration of activities of public agencies delivering economic development services to prevent unnecessary overlap of services.
- RDFFG will develop, promote and celebrate the region's heritage and cultural attractions
- RDFFG will support and advocate for the Asia-Pacific Gateway Initiative and the required infrastructure improvements.

The Economic Climate, Community Futures Fraser-Fort George, 2008

This report was completed in 2008 by the local Community Futures office and provides a good overall snapshot of the region. Unemployment was reported to be relatively low at 5.0% (2008). Oil & gas production in the nearby Peace region and Alberta presents strong options for many industrial service providers.

Land resource management firms face strong business opportunities in exploration from both mining and oil & gas. Currently a number of exploration projects are taking place throughout the Fraser-Fort George region.

Tourism in Robson-Canoe Valleys continues its steady development. Health care has been a particularly bright point, as a new cancer clinic and an increase in health science and supply causes much of the economic activity in this field to be repatriated to the region. Transportation is poised for a major surge, as the development of an inland port and international airport create the potential for structural growth beyond a resource extraction driver.

The expansion of broadband and cellular telephone service in McBride and Valemount, coupled with initiatives to grow the infrastructure in Prince George, has increased an awareness of the interconnection with the global economy, and opportunities arising from this connection.

Landcor Industrial Land Inventory in the Northern Transportation Corridor of British Columbia, 2007

This report was prepared for the Northern Development Initiative Trust and contains an analytical evaluation of the industrial land inventory within the Northern Transportation Corridor of British Columbia. Its purpose is to recognize the inventory of vacant industrial Crown Land available for development, as well as to recognize areas of opportunity for the government of British Columbia when it comes to supporting development of crown and private properties.

The vacant land available throughout the corridor, the acreage available, the assessed value of the land and the inventory currently held by the Provincial Government is assessed. The city of Prince George, Village of McBride, and Village of Valemount are included in this report. McBride has a total industrial acreage of 11.3, assessed to a value of $35,400. Prince George has over 3,530 acres of vacant industrial land surrounding the city and 450 acres within the city limits. 78 properties are listed as vacant. Valemount is not included on this list.

The conclusion of this report states that there is not enough vacant industrial crown land within the Northern Transportation Corridor of British Columbia to support a significant manufacturing development initiative. The **lower mainland has no remaining land or opportunity for additional land** without impact on Agricultural Land Reserve properties. Support from the Provincial Government is needed to release vacant land suitable for industrial development, meeting requirements such as proximity to populated cores, land strength to withstand industrial development and proximity to transportation hubs for logistical viability. This report supports the need for a strong transportation corridor in order to handle an increase in traffic to Prince George and Prince Rupert. British Columbia is transitioning air and sea freight capacity from the Lower Mainland to the Northern area with the development of container facilities and cargo handling airports in Prince George and Prince Rupert. In order to capitalize on this increase in the movement of materials it will be imperative to properties for direct and supporting industries are made available.

A Cultural Plan for the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George provides funding for eight cultural agencies and a number of cultural projects to serve its 100,000 residents and visitors across a geographic area of 52,000 km^2. The purpose of this report was to provide a five year vision, encourage participation, create a financially sustainable structure, foster collaboration, provide funded agencies with funding certainty, develop cultural resources to attract visitors and increase quality of life for residents, and facilitate the adoption of supporting cultural policies. The base of information was collected from an earlier completed report entitled "Towards a Cultural Plan".

This Phase 1 plan identified several cultural challenges such as the representation of the First Nations culture, gaps in performing and visual arts and the issue of creating a critical mass of cultural institutions in the region. The link between tourism and culture in the region was stated as being weak and a need for a marketing plan for culture and heritage was identified.

A number of recommendations were made. They are:

- **Recommended Action #1**: Provide for cultural coordination and administrative support system for the RDFFG cultural program.
- **Recommended Action #2:** Create a RDFFG Cultural Services Advisory Committee to affect the implementation of the cultural plan.

- **Recommended Action #3:** Seek agreement of all participants to the responsibilities as listed or as modified as the first step in implementing this leadership model.
- **Recommended Action #4:** Require all of the larger cultural clients to provide technical support to smaller cultural organizations throughout the RDFFG.
- **Recommended Action #5:** Identify leaders to champion the further development and implementation of the cultural plan.
- **Recommended Action #6:** Seek specific support of the Exploration Place to assist in artifact management.
- **Recommended Actions #7 & #8:** Employ strategies to engage residents in the cultural life of the community. Create a communication plan as part of the work of the RDFFG Cultural Services Advisory Committee.
- **Recommended Action #9:** Produce a pamphlet with a map showing the walking routes to the Prince George cultural facilities and include points of interest (heritage buildings, pubic art, etc.) along the way as well as adding nature trails (along the river).
- **Recommended Action #10:** Arrange a meeting for City and RDFFG officials to meet with local government representatives from the City of Kelowna to discuss the issues related to creating a cultural district.
- **Recommended Action #11**: Review the cultural district suggestions and either using or changing those suggestions produce a plan to create a cultural district.
- **Recommended action #12:** Using local expertise put together a group from across the region to create a cultural marketing plan directed at both residents and tourists.
- **Recommended action #13:** Using this same local expertise, engage in a branding exercise and create a cultural brand for the region.
- **Recommended Actions #14-16:** This includes organizing an annual forum for people working in the cultural sector, creating a newsletter that provides information on what people working in the various facilities need to know over the course of the operating season, and creating a list of local experts that people in the region can call on for assistance.

Other recommendations included a memorandum of understanding between each member municipality, encouraging development of joint marketing efforts, leveraging funding from other sources and implementing standardized procedures for financial reporting, accounting, employment and attendance. Information for funding sources for cultural initiatives is listed. A listing of cultural organizations in the region is included as well as a series of templates for future initiatives, such as an annual operations plan, data collection, mission statement and vision statement. This report is intended to assist efforts of the cultural volunteers.

Omineca Beetle Action Coalition Tourism Strategy, 2009

This Strategy addresses the growth and development of a thriving tourism sector in the Prince George region.

Four recommendations and 18 action items are listed in order to:

- address land and resource information, planning and policy issues to increase certainty for tourism operators and potential investors
- improve access for travellers to and within the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) region
- increase awareness of the nature and value of, and the opportunities associated with, tourism in the region

- increase tourism in the region by using its features and attractions to full advantage.

The ‘next steps’ for OBAC include bringing together senior staff from relevant government agencies and the private sector to work with OBAC to quickly develop an Action Plan. This Action Plan works out the details on the “how to and how much” for implementation of this strategy. OBAC will also be working with partner organizations to enable implementation of the Action Plans.

Understanding and Transforming a Staples-based Economy: Place-based Development in Northern British Columbia, Canada, 2010.

This chapter was reviewed from Dr. Halseth's 2010 book *The Next Rural Economies: Constructing Rural Place in Global Economies*. It is pointed out that during the beginning of the 1950's British Columbia was considered a "have-not" province that depended on transfer payments from the federal government to sustain its basic services. However this began to change as the province began utilizing their abundant natural resources and exporting to the United States. The following 30 years showed major growth for British Columbia as it learned to develop liveable communities that were not just temporary homes for workers, but places to raise families and more.

Soon after, the economy of British Columbia began to change again. Resources in British Columbia became subject to the fast paced and competitive global economy. This resulted in major restructuring and production began to shift to a more 'flexible' approach where larger plants dominated with increased use of capital technology and, subsequently, fewer employees.

Today resources-based industries have had to take many actions to survive, such as introducing flexible labour contracts to reduce the impact of slowdowns and layoffs on employees and utilizing the bidding process for contract jobs for employees who are only hired when needed. Communities once built upon the thriving forestry industry are now seeing major job losses and wage reductions. According to Halseth, "successive provincial governments, regardless of political orientation, have adjusted policy to allow large resources companies to remain competitive and export oriented". This has led to mill closures and job losses as the province has become too reliant on resource revenues.

Halseth recommends communities focus on creating a unique sense of place and compete for both business opportunity and talent. Public policy will play a major role in allowing rural communities to become players in the larger 'new' economy. Halseth suggests that in renewing a vision for Northern British Columbia, economic development should emphasize the sustainability to the environment, quality of life and decreased economic leakages. The economy should move away from resource dependence toward an economy that is grounded in resources but also includes manufacturing and other options. The need for a knowledge-based economy is emphasized, and improvements in Infrastructure, telecommunications and addressing the skills gaps within the local economy are just a few of the suggestions made in order to move towards creating a competitive advantage for northern British Columbia. Rural communities need to actively pursue, and 'get into the game' of attracting and retaining talent. This will include training and assistance of owners, managers and staff in order for businesses to be run successfully. Small and medium-sized enterprises will be the way of the new 'place-based economy'. Regional partnerships will be key and it is stressed that communities will need to work together and put forward a concerted effort to build their capacity.

<u>**Village of Valemount Pre-Feasibility Study of the Valemount Forest Products Site, 2010**</u>

This study was completed to consider municipal options with respect to the Valemount Forest Products site. The municipality was interested in learning any potential benefits to the community in securing an interest in the property.

The mill site has been owned by Carrier Lumber since 2005 when it was purchased from Canfor Corporation. It is located adjacent to the CN Rail Line, west of Highway 5 and is approximately three kilometres south of Valemount. The mill site does not have municipal water and sanitary lines. The study points out that in 2008 the land in Valemount was assessed by the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George at just over $102 million and encompasses 4.96 square kilometres. Nearly half of the land in Valemount is reported to be Crown Land.

The study conducted an examination of the suitability of potential uses of the site which includes industrial, residential and commercial uses. Three options were considered for Valemount. They consist of purchasing the entire site (7 parcels), extending municipal boundaries to ensure municipal control over future zoning and refraining from taking action other than to monitor the status of the site.

Each option weighed the opportunities and risks. Purchasing the mill included risks such as high operating costs in keeping it in working condition as well as the instability of the industry as to whether or not future sale of the mill would occur. In extending municipal boundaries the risks included overextending the municipality with respect to municipal resources and the increased need for services to the land. Final conclusions recommended that the municipality not take action but monitor the situation as this option would not incur costs to the municipality and would allow them to assess economic conditions and demand for land growth.

It should be noted that municipal Council decided to not pursue the purchase and leave the property in private sector hands.

4 Developing Strategic Direction & Prioritizing Opportunities

A sound Economic Development Strategy builds upon the unique assets and resources of a community, communicating those characteristics to potential investment and development partners in a way that demonstrates an inherent value proposition that is unique.

In the increasingly networked world of the global economy, such community brands can increasingly be used to build dynamic external linkages that enhance the ability to interact with and compete in the global market. A growing number of entrepreneurial 21st century communities are utilizing their local advantages and emerging technology tools to create international networks designed to spur innovation, investment and job creation, while retaining the cultural and environmental assets of their communities.

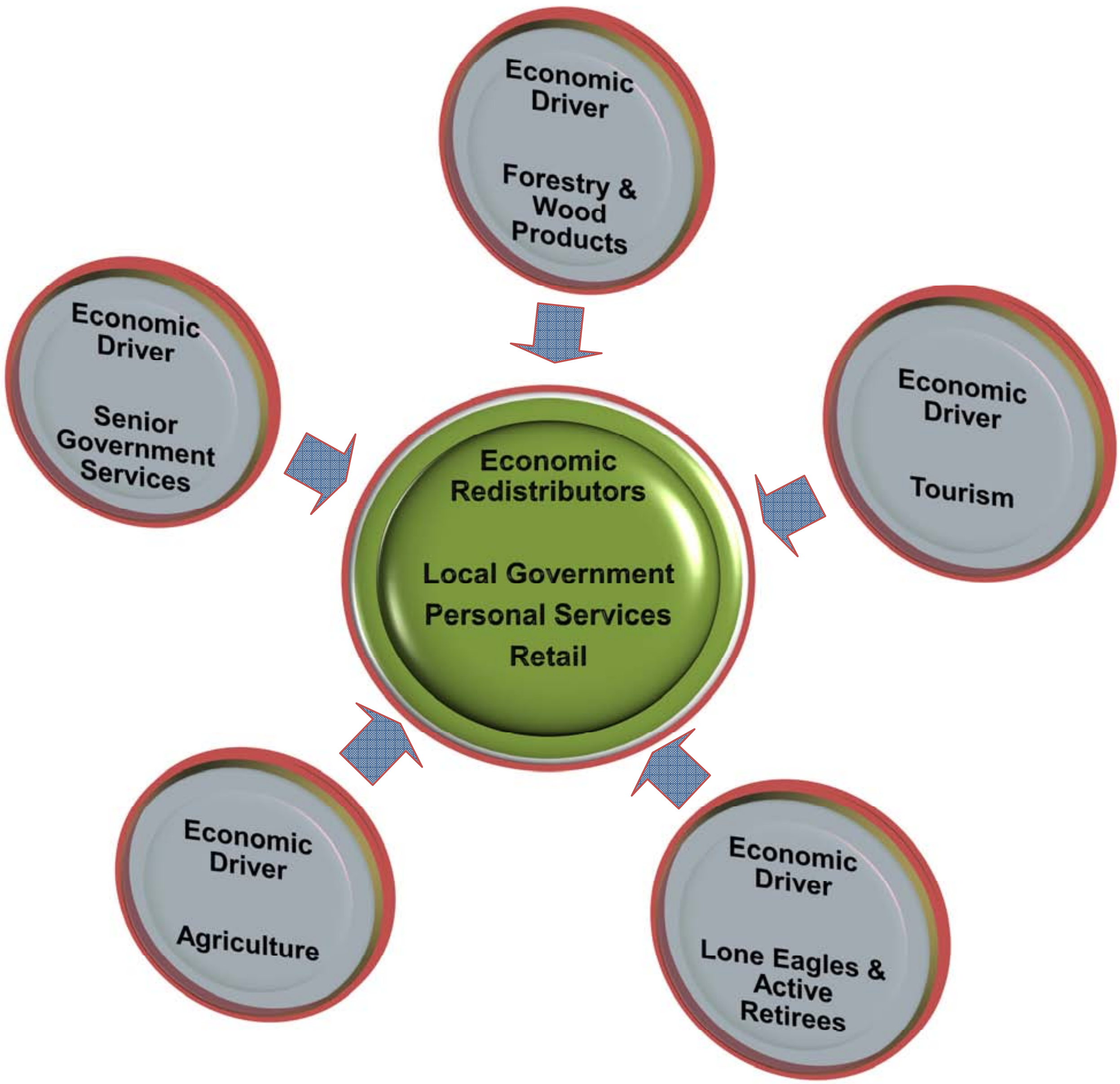
While combining these trends in local economic development, the selection of economic development opportunities is rooted in the philosophy that initiatives must ultimately increase the total wealth within a community. There are two main ways to do this:

1. Export Development – any initiative that brings new money into the community:
    - Starting/attracting a business that sells products/services outside the community
    - Attracting visitors who then buy local products/services
    - Encouraging existing business to sell their product/service outside the community.
2. Import Substitution – any initiative that keeps money in the community:
    - Encourage people and businesses to buy their goods/services locally rather than importing them from another community
    - Starting or attracting new businesses that recognize the leakage and provide a product/service to stop it.

Activities in the above two categories are economic drivers – they bring in the wealth. Other activities are redistributors – they circulate the money within a community. Strong economies bring in new money and then keep it in the community as it moves from business to business.

This concept is profiled in the following figure.

Figure 15 – Economic Drivers and Redistributors for Robson-Canoe Valleys



Note: Lone Eagles are defined as freelance professionals. They are knowledge workers with highly transportable skills. Further discussion will take place in Section 4.1.

<u>The highest priority initiatives are those that directly increase wealth</u> (e.g. the retention or attraction of an economic driving export-oriented business).

The following target sectors are recommended as top sectors in priority order for the two valleys:

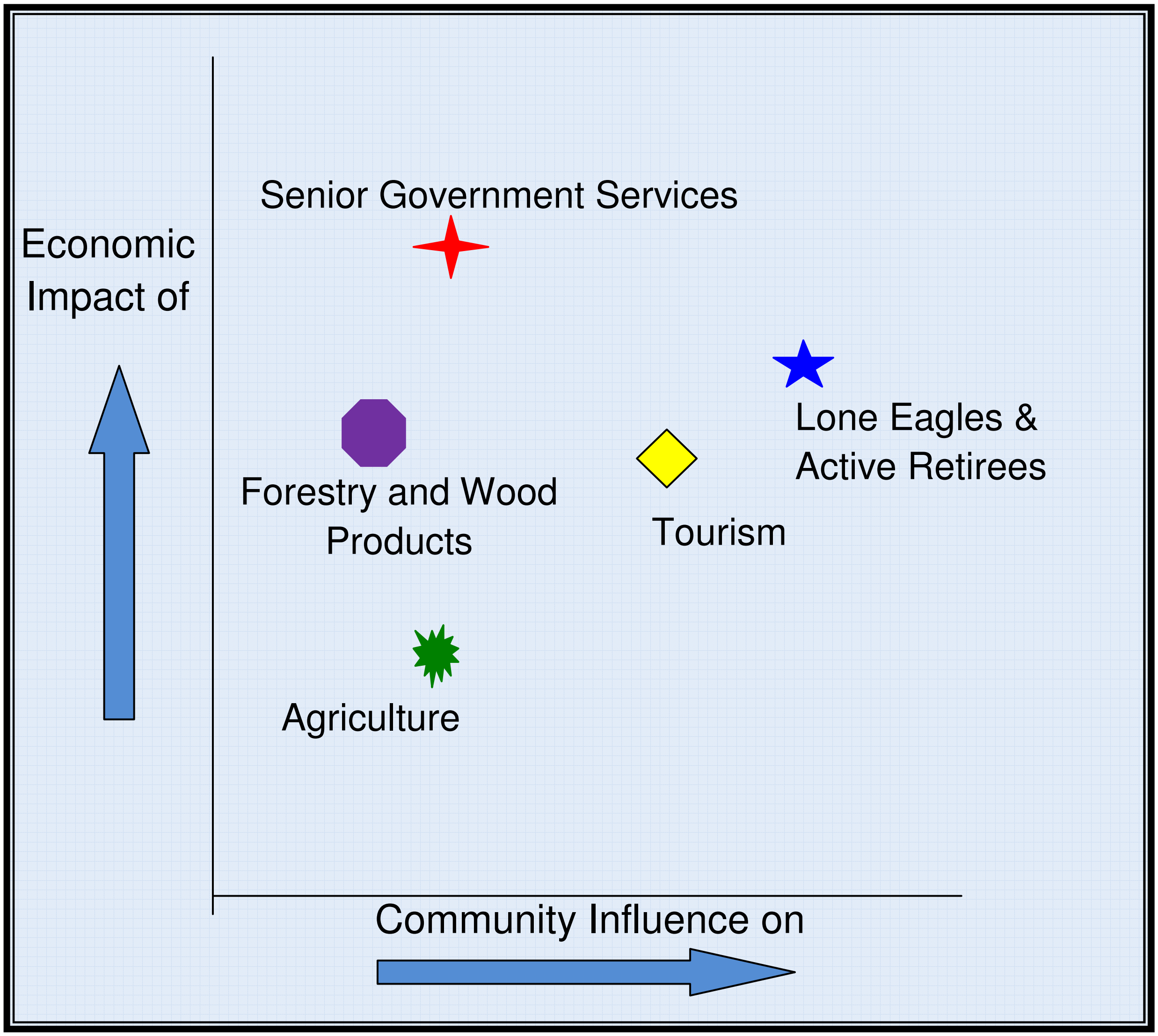
Figure 16 – Priority Sector Opportunities

Downstream Region	Upstream Region
• Lone Eagles (independent business people) • Senior Government Services • Forestry and Wood Products • Tourism • Agriculture	• Lone Eagles (independent business people) • Tourism • Senior Government Services • Forestry and Wood Products • Agriculture

These opportunities put focus on the communities' current core strengths and maximize use of underutilized assets. It also gives aim to new directions that have the potential to shape the community for decades to come.

Traditional economic growth has been based on the forestry sector and while the discussion below shows that current opportunities in this sector seem limited for Robson-Canoe Valleys, within the five year timeline of this strategy a lot can happen. Conditions that are out of the control of the local community such as shifts in demand, modifications to government policy and changes to energy policy can quickly create opportunities or turn them further away. Ultimately, the position this strategy suggests is that the communities be proactive on developing the sectors that contain significant current and growing opportunity (e.g. lone eagles, tourism, senior government services) and take a retention/maintenance approach to sectors that are showing less growth (e.g. forestry and wood products, agriculture). Local input has suggested that agriculture has been the economic mainstay throughout the last century. Support will be required by various levels of government to ensure that the agricultural industry is given priority.

Figure 17 – "Economic Impact of" and "Community Influence on" Likely Investment and Job Creation Opportunities



The traits of the recommended target sectors are summarized in the following table.

Figure 18 – Description of Prioritized Economic Drivers

	Lone Eagles	Forestry and Wood Products	Tourism	Senior Government Services	Agriculture
Estimated 1-3 year sector growth	Strong	Flat for logging; Some growth potential in renewable energy, wood bi-products and wood product manufacturing	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
Complement to existing local base	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Very Strong
Have a significant and sustaining impact on local economy	Strong	Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Moderate
Municipal capital investment required to attract investment	Low – makes use of existing housing and business infrastructure	Low to Moderate depending on investment required for industrial property and infrastructure services	Moderate to High	Low to High depending on required infrastructure investment.	Low to Moderate
Current state of the sector?	Key economic driver in the region is growth in small businesses. For people in a positive cash flow position it is a good time to buy, but also a poor time to sell. Those looking to upgrade will still be in the market.	Major decline in industry as a whole. Move to green economy is creating value-added opportunities for energy generation and wood products but it is risky because 'winners' are difficult to predict.	A number of macro-economic factors have caused tourism to struggle in recent years: appreciation of the Canadian Dollar, passport requirements for U.S. citizens and struggling economy. Nearby high income Alberta market is a boon for operators.	This sector provides jobs to approximately 9% of Robson-Canoe Valleys. A significant contributor of well-paying jobs and tax assessment.	The sector has been a small but stable part of the local economy. It is at risk due to increasing input costs and regulations that make small farms far less profitable. Becoming the norm are larger and more efficient farms or farmers turning to a second income to make ends meet.

	Lone Eagles	Forestry and Wood Products	Tourism	Senior Government Services	Agriculture
What is the region's current ability to capitalize on the sector?	Excellent. Strides have been made to improve quality of place through investments in downtowns. Decent selection of affordable housing and incredible access to the outdoors. Excellent local services for communities as small as these; but constant threats remain as seen with the school in Dunster.	The region has experienced mill closures within the last 2 years that have had affects on suppliers. With the economy improving it may be possible that the dormant mills will restart or attract new investment. Poor electricity reliability is a chief concern that must be addressed.	Sector has been growing in Valemount and adds stability in McBride. Winter season flourishes but is somewhat nearing capacity. Additional attractions are needed to diversify successfully into non-winter months.	Employment in government services has grown little over the last decade, but attempts to centralize some services have hurt smaller communities. Large region requires multiple offices so this provides opportunity for Robson-Canoe Valleys.	It is getting increasing difficult to farm profitably in more remote areas. Without a local abattoir getting animals to market is more expensive. Some new ideas, such as blueberry farming, are on the horizon and hold some promise. Organic and locally branded products are the best option for success but this requires better local organization.
Desired future situation by 2015	A 20% increase in the number of Lone Eagles established in the region over the next five years. Existing firms have expanded from no employees to 1-9 employees.	Electricity services are strong. Local mills are operating at full capacity and are diversifying to include quality finished wood products. Bioenergy initiatives have created jobs. Retention program has helped companies expand.	Improved year-round product offering that results in a 10% increase in visitation.	Existing government services have remained in the area and in some cases have improved (e.g. seniors housing).	The sector stabilizes and while there is no stopping increased farm size working to service large markets, the region has a strongly branded agriculture product that is recognized in Alberta and British Columbia for its quality and uniqueness.

4.1 Strong Future Economic Driver: Lone Eagles and Active Retirees

Freelance professionals, also known as 'Lone Eagles', are knowledge workers with highly transportable skills, such as writers, analysts, accountants, trades people, consultants, sales professionals and other advisors. Most live in large cities but many are moving to small towns and rural areas for better quality of life. According to Dr. Halseth of University of Northern British Columbia, this group of "Amenity Seekers" appreciate rural communities because of the quality of life, clean environment and having a reasonable amount of services and amenities to achieve work/life relationships[3].

Lone Eagles' infrastructure requirements are few, which means that business development and attraction for this sector requires limited investment by the region. By definition a Lone Eagle is someone who:

- Generates 75% or more of their income from outside the local area
- Mobile and can live where they want
- They are fleeing urban environments, rapid development and environmental degradation.
- They want to find:
  - Clean air and quiet spaces to enjoy flora and fauna
  - High quality telecommunications services
  - A place closer to relatives (sometimes means returning "home")
  - Outdoor recreational activities
  - A safer place to live
  - Employment for their spouse (if applicable).

Many fledgling entrepreneurs and Lone Eagle professionals would prefer to begin business ventures in their homes where they have fewer expenses and less risk. In response, many communities allow restricted home occupations as permitted uses in many residential zoning districts. When Lone Eagles are successful they expand their operations by leasing office space and hire staff or contract out work to other Lone Eagles (e.g. sub-consulting, bookkeeping, etc.).

Although the quality of these considerations is based on an individual's tastes, it appears that Robson-Canoe Valleys can provide many of these essential requirements. To ensure an appropriate openness to home occupations, the municipalities should review, on a regular basis its own local by-laws and policies as they pertain to home occupations.

The benefits to the community of a strong Lone Eagle presence are many.

1. Their dependence on local infrastructure is minimal.
2. The business operators may become the key skilled labour that is required for larger investors to feel confident in the region.
3. They provide services and supplies to larger businesses.
4. They provide a needed level of diversification which keeps it stable in tough economic times.
5. They are the same businesses that will grow quietly or quickly into 5, 10 or 50-person operations.
6. Spouses and/or children of these small business operators offer a ready supply of local employees.
7. People are much more likely to shop where they work which increases economic spin-off.

[3] Bruce, D, Halseth, G, Markey, S. (2009). "Understanding and transforming a staples-based economy: Place-based development in northern British Columbia, Canada" in *The next rural economies (251-262).*

8. People are much more likely to feel a sense of community if they live and work in the same place. This contributes greatly to the social side of the community by way of increased volunteerism, participation in local debates and financial donations to local non-profits/charities.
9. The types of recreational amenities, community improvements and physical environment they pursue are generally consistent with the desires of tourists or visitors from neighbouring communities. This means that an investment in attracting Lone Eagles will also attract visitors/tourists.
10. Business leaders have a way of attracting other business leaders. These Lone Eagles will be the region's ambassadors for new investment.

Case Study: Wallowa County, Oregon

An increasing number of rural areas are considering this approach. For example, Wallowa County, Oregon is the first community identified that has used the term "Lone Eagle" as an economic development strategy and has a lot of similarities to Robson-Canoe Valleys. Wallowa is a remote community surrounded by several small villages and its economy once relied very heavily on natural resources for its existence. The local copper mine was the main employer, and the forestry industry supplemented. When those sectors turned sour in the 1990s, the community has had to reinvent itself in order to survive the economic downturn.

The table below displays the population of Wallowa County and its communities. The region experienced a period of decline and needed to re-evaluate their goals in order to stabilize the population. Since this period they have been successful at maintaining their population, and in nearly all areas of the County, except the unincorporated portion (the local equivalent of Electoral Area H), population actually increased.

Figure 19: Location of Wallowa County, Oregon

Figure 20: Stable Population in Communities that Comprise Wallowa County

Community	2000	2004	2007
Enterprise	1,895	1,940	1,940
Joseph	1,055	1,080	1,100
Lostine	265	250	250
Wallowa	870	870	885
Unincorporated	3,165	3,010	2,955
Wallowa County	**7,250**	**7,150**	**7,130**

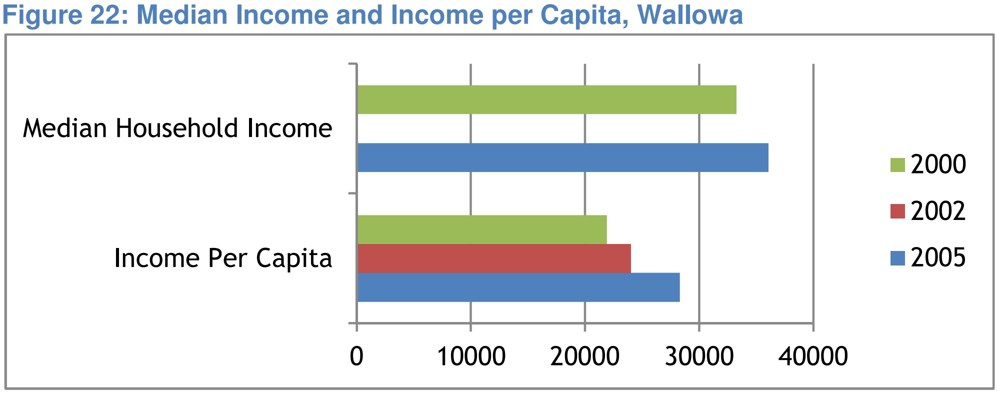
Similar to the Robson-Canoe Valleys, Wallowa is challenged by an immediate surrounding area that has a very low population base and one has to drive hours to reach cities of any significant size. In this type of community a feeling of isolation can discourage new and potential residents. Engaging them and involving them in the community will help to create a sense of belonging. When Lone Eagles feel that a location is welcoming and open they are more inclined to stay and operate their business. Wallowa has the highest rate of sole-proprietor businesses in Oregon and many are home-based with two or three employees.

Figure 21: Driving Distance to Wallowa

Urban Centre	Population	Driving Distance
La Grande, Oregon	13,000	1.75 hours
Pendleton, Oregon	17,000	2.5 hours
Lewiston, Idaho	31,000	2.25 hours
Walla Walla, Washington	30,000	2.75 hours
Tri-Cities Region, Washington	195,000	3.5 hours
Spokane, Washington	440,000	4.25 hours

In 2000, the median income for a household in the county was $33,257, and this increased to $36,058 in 2005.The per capita income for the county was $28,300 in 2005, up from $21,891 in 2000. The figures below conclusively show that Wallowa County has seen an increase in its annual payroll by 23% and shows a positive trend in median household income and income per capita.

Figure 22: Median Income and Income per Capita, Wallowa



Source: US Census Bureau; Bureau of Economic Analysis
Note: Statistics for 2002 Median Household Income unavailable.

Figure 23: Economic Indicator: Payroll

2006 Average Annual Payroll % in State	66.2%
1996-2006 Change in Annual Payroll	+23%

Source: Oregon Employment Department

In Wallowa the core economic driver was timber, but as the national forests waned it became apparent that local families were going to have to find a new source of income. Community groups gathered to develop a plan to revitalize their economy. To that end, many new, creative businesses started to emerge, and before they knew it Wallowa was a community with galleries, painters, tourists, and much more. A sense of local pride also emerged with this, and soon enough locals and newcomers began to realize the quality of life that a small community like this could offer them. A free business support program also helped retain and attract business growth in the community.

Local efforts to revitalize the Main Street came in the form of a cobblestone sidewalks and removal of powerlines, as well a 7 monumental bronze sculptures (shown to the right). These large sculptures represented the theme of the west and were donated by local artists, promoting a local sense of pride.

Wallowa is a good example of a community that has improved the quality of life, and the residents desire to be there by undertaking extensive information gathering to understand local and visitor motivations. Residents found a way to live in a space that allowed them to be independent and free from the hustle and bustle of the city, but retained the amenities that would typically be seen in a larger center. Experiencing culture and arts is a major draw yearly for tourists, and has thus inspired many new local businesses, and 'Lone Eagles'.

Lone Eagle Approach for Robson-Canoe Valleys

For Robson-Canoe Valleys the Lone Eagle target could include people operating small businesses in:

- Oil, gas and mining services (a growing sector in the region)
- Business/management consulting (a growing sector provincially)
- Alternative health and wellness products and services (servicing a growing elderly population and trend in people of all ages)
- Farmers who have identified niche markets
- Tourism and recreational services businesses (building off a local opportunity)
- Small artisan businesses, such as music lessons or painting classes
- Recreational activities (outside of ATV/skiing) will help create a 'sense of place' for the Lone Eagle. Increasing these kinds of amenities will make the area more attractive to Lone Eagles

How do "Active Retirees" Fit in the Mix?

Population statistics in Section 3 indicates a growing retirement age group and a limited population in the 20-34 age group. In addition to its own residents, Robson-Canoe Valleys has an opportunity to attract retirees who are leaving work in the cities and looking for a quieter way of life in a supportive community. According to a recent Decima Research survey, over 50% of respondents aged 50-59 intend to buy a new retirement home.

In most ways, the 'active retiree' fits the mould of the Lone Eagle. These new retirees and expected to enjoy a much more active lifestyle than their parents have. The same survey identified the following characteristics of tomorrow's retiree:

- More than half of those aged 45 to 54 expect to work at least some of the time when retired. Just 22% of today's retirees do so.
- About 28% of Boomers (tomorrow's retirees) expressed interest in buying a vacation property, motor home, or boat. Only 15% of current Canadian retirees have done that, or plan to do so in the future.
- Just over 80% of Boomers expect to be physically active. That was well above the 64% response rate for today's retirees.

Robson-Canoe Valleys is well positioned to promote as a home for today's active retirees. The area has many of the amenities that the active retiree is looking for:

- Reasonable, affordable housing
- Access to transportation – road and air
- Suitable medical services are in close proximity
- Safe community
- Friendly environment – sense of community
- Clean environment
- Scenic area
- Recreational opportunities
- Organized social events
- Opportunity to volunteer and get involved in the community

While under different circumstances, the Town of Elliot Lake, Ontario, is a community who re-branded itself after the closure of its uranium mining operation in the late 80s. Due to a surplus of housing and the amenities described above, Elliot Lake began to attract retirees and is now the self-proclaimed "Jewel in the Wilderness'. With considerable government and local support the community developed a marketing strategy which promoted itself as the perfect place to enjoy retirement and has now gained a reputation as the most affordable retirement community in the country.

In the stakeholder consultations that were a part of the strategic planning process, the suggestion of supporting a plan to encourage people to retire in Robson-Canoe Valleys was often made. The area is a place that welcomes new comers and makes every effort to involve them in the community life of Robson-Canoe Valleys. Combine this with services, superior scenery and recreational choices and you have a quality of life that makes an attractive option for the active retiree. Over the long term, Robson-Canoe Valleys should plan to create more infrastructure and facilities that cater to this demographic group and increase its potential to realize a substantial share of this new market.

It will be shown in coming text that the Lone Eagles/Resident/Tourism targets have a lot in common.

4.1.1 Investment Readiness: Critical Site Selection Criteria

Figure 24 - Investment Readiness: Lone Eagles and Active Retirees

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Local Opportunities for Business Growth		
Local industry and investment attraction	✓ ✗	Robson-Canoe Valleys has slowly seen growth in attracting investment, especially in the tourism industry, but growth has not been above average.
Transportation and Distribution		
Proximity to Highways and Larger Centres	✓ ✗	The region is bisected by two major provincial highways, however, the communities are a long distance to cities of any size such as Prince George (2.5 - 3.5 hours), Kamloops (4-5 hours) and Edmonton (5-6 hours).
Proximity to Airports	✓ ✗	The closest airport with scheduled service is located in Prince George, which is a 200-300 km drive.
Utilities		
Telecommunications	✓ ✗	The area recently completed expansion of broadband and cellular telephone service in McBride and Valemount. It covers a wide area using different wireless frequencies to cover line-of-sight and non-line-of-sight locations therefore most areas are accessible. While the strength of the cellular signal and speed of broadband transmission is a common complaint amongst local residents.
Property Availability and Cost		
Availability of Commercial Buildings and Land	✓ ✗	Anecdotal evidence is that there is always some office/commercial space available in either McBride or Valemount. However, the quality varies with most spaces being average in quality, requiring upgrades.
Education and Training		
Elementary and Secondary School Performance	✓ ✗	Dunster school is slated to close due to efforts to realize efficiencies in the delivery of education services. However, both Valemount and McBride have good services.
Community Colleges and Universities – Programs/Quality	✗	The College of New Caledonia is in Valemount, however with limited programming the closest post-secondary institution is located in Prince George. Most students are forced to leave the area to attend school.
Local Employment/Training Services	✓	The local CFDC offers excellent counselling services, the municipalities have made efforts at expanding the training that is available. It is good for the size of the communities.
Quality of Life		

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Health Care Facilities	✓ ✗	Valemount has a health centre and McBride has a hospital offering full patient care with the exception of some speciality services. There are seniors housing and services available throughout the area but will require more services related to home care and extended care services in the future as active retirees move into years where health care support is more critical.
Emergency Services	✓	Local fire and emergency services, with region-wide enhanced 911.
Recreation and Cultural Facilities	✓	For communities of this size, the region has a tremendous recreational and culture offering. This is especially the case when it comes to outdoor recreation. A Cultural Plan has been completed for the region which suggests more opportunities on the way.
Housing Availability and Cost	✓	The average housing cost in Robson-Canoe Valleys is lower than that of the province, as well as surrounding areas. While the housing prices are increasing, they are still considered affordable in comparison with the surrounding region.
Marketing/Promotions/Information		
Sector-Specific Website Promotions	✗	This type of information is critical to Lone Eagles. While there is information on attracting investment, there is no focus on attracting this sector.
Sector-Specific Fact Sheets	✗	Information that is critical to Lone Eagles largely does not currently exist in a summarized format.
Overall Investment Attraction Initiative	✗	There is local drive to attract involvement as however much of the investment attraction tends to happen on a reactive basis.
Overall Investment Retention Initiative	✗	Currently these businesses are serviced on a reactive basis.

4.2 Strong Future Economic Driver: Tourism

The tourism industry in Robson-Canoe Valleys is recognized as a significant economic generator with tremendous growth potential.

Valemount is on the main transportation corridor between Vancouver and Edmonton. The area is in close proximity to Jasper National Park and Mount Robson Provincial Park which delivers a significant population seeking an outdoor adventure product from walking/hiking to the more adventurous products of heli-skiing and snowmobiling. Most of the tourists to the area are from Alberta with 80% being from the Edmonton area.

Snowmobiling is further recognized as a flagship business in the valley. The Valemount Area Recreation Development Association (VARDA) maintains statistics for three managed snowmobile areas – Allan Creek, Clemina Creek and Chappell Creek. There are several other areas from which statistics are not available, however, it is estimated that 20,000-30,000 user days were logged from mid-November to June

during the 2010 season. It is also noted that snowmobilers are now including their families and have broadened their activities to include skiing and snowboarding. Additionally, the Valemount section on a popular western Canadian snowmobile chat forum received more than 87,500 hits from September 2009 to May 2010. VARDA also recognizes that the snowmobilers are looking to return in the summer months for camping and ATVing, which is still an underdeveloped industry due to government restrictions on the use of those motorized vehicles in the backcountry.

Heli-skiing is another economic opportunity which has expanded to include four companies in the valley from McBride to Valemount. The season is from January to mid-April customers coming from the United States (65%), Europe (25%) and Canada (10%). The industry does not do any collaborative marketing and is growing through quality of product and word-of-mouth referrals. Clients of heli-skiing are considered sophisticated tourists with high expectations of service and product. This sector has tremendous growth potential and carries with it the potential of elevating the tourism reputation in the world market. This industry is highly developed but is not marketed cooperatively or otherwise to the point where it is synonymous with heli-skiing as a recreational option (i.e when tourists think Robson-Canoe Valleys, they should think 'heli-skiing).

Tourism has significantly more importance in the Valemount area than in other parts of the valley. The area of Tete Jaune is in close proximity to Mount Robson and is in the ‘catchment’ area of tourist travel and interest. Valemount is heavily involved in tourism and over the last couple of decades designed its economy around the tourism industry with the support of the municipality, organizations such as VARDA and careful stewardship with adventure tourism activities. Valemount also has two specific things going for it with respect to tourism:

- recognized Gateway status by the Province allows the community to charge a ‘hospitality tax’ on overnight stays to contribute to tourism industry development
- it is home to the NORE (Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism) program giving it even more prominence as a centre of tourism and turning out students that are trained in guiding, interpretation and recreation instruction.

There is a wide range of community events that have tourism possibilities in the valley. Farmers markets, craft fairs, community dances and art shows all have potential to enhance local experiences. Some events are meant to be for local enjoyment only, but others have significant appeal to tourists. For example, the Ice Cream Social held the first Saturday in July in Dunster attracts hundreds of people from the local area and beyond to experience a rural event and enjoy local products as well as the Canadian Mountain Holidays heli-skiing out of Valemount.

Throughout the valley and in the McBride area, tourism is recognized as an industry of the valley but of lesser importance than in the south east areas. Tourism is commonly thought of as services provided to transients but with the absence of a well defined product to offer tourists to entice them to stay for an extended period of time. There are exceptions to this with an excellent snow machine trade, some camping areas as well as a successful heli-skiing business in Crescent Spur.

All areas of the valley recognize and support the value of tourism as an economic generator to the area and are very aware of their very special product and appeal to non-residents. Both McBride and Valemount have created interesting and attractive entrances to their communities with impressive tourism information centres.

Interest in future development in the Valemount area has been strong. In the past, proposals have been presented for a recreation area which includes a gondola development. In addition, a ski hill development was investigated which recommended a larger scale development that would not be dependent on the local market. Interest is currently being expressed by a developer to build a condo/boutique retail complex in the centre of Valemount which would provide a more upscale level of shopping and accommodations needed to compliment the community's desire to be an alpine resort area. While these developments have either been shelved or are pending, this level of interest shows confidence in the area's product and the will and expertise of the tourism stakeholders to excel in this field.

Future opportunities have been identified in hot springs development and also development of a year-round lake to further enhance the resort industry in the area.

Cultural Development

Through a 5 year Cultural Plan for the region, funding has been made available for eight cultural agencies in addition to project funding. The overall objectives of the plan are to encourage cultural development and awareness, create cultural sustainability, develop cultural partnerships and to provide security through operational funding.

Sixteen recommendations were made to enhance tourism and culture in the region. Of greatest relevance to the valley were strategies to create a cultural district with identified leaders to advance the potential of cultural tourism through cultural branding, joint marketing and working together to leverage funds and government support. The report identifies the importance of the commitment of residents to further develop culture in the valley.

While residents of the valley recognize their economic and tourism potential, there is a general lack of awareness of the cultural possibilities which would contribute to tourism development as well as civic pride and community involvement.

SWOT Analysis

Focus groups and interviews were held with representatives of the tourism industry, both in business and through organizational involvement with the purpose of identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to tourism in Robson-Canoe Valleys. The results of this process are represented below:

Figure 25: Tourism SWOT Analysis

Figure 26 - Investment Readiness: Tourism

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Labour Force Characteristics		
Unemployment/ Employment Rate	✗	The unemployment rate for the valley has decreased since 2001, in all likelihood due to an outmigration of workers seeking employment following job losses in the forestry industry.
Competition for Required Skill Sets	✓	Tourism positions are mainly required in the Valemount area where there is a tourism outdoor recreation and ecotourism program delivered by CNC providing a ready source of trained employees.
Language Skills	✓	Major source markets are the United States and Canada; secondary source is Europe. Language skills are thus not a major concern.
Local Industry		
Local Industry Cluster	✓ ✗	There are cluster developments in outdoor adventure activities including snowmobiling and heli-skiing. However, there is a need to expand and diversify tourism and culture-related businesses and provide more activities for young families.
Transportation and Distribution		
Proximity to Current/Future Customers	✓	The area is located mid distance from Vancouver and Edmonton on a well utilized route. The area is in close proximity to Jasper National Park and Mount Robson Provincial- visitors from Edmonton area are a prime target market.
Proximity to Highways/Airports	✓	Valemount is 300 km from the nearest major airport with regularly scheduled air service (Prince George). It has a local airport 9 km away. The local airport has one paved surface runway with the capacity to carry a DC6. McBride is 211 km to the Prince George airport. The area is served by Highways 16 and 5
Utilities		
Telecommunications	✓ ✗	Valemount and McBride have good service, but outside those communities it is less reliable.
Local Business Environment		
Economic Development involvement in local business	✓ ✗	Consultations indicate that the municipal officials and development staff are helpful and business-oriented, but there is also perception that there needs to be more coordinated messaging for the area around tourism and more cooperation between the major centres of McBride and Valemount in the form of partnerships for mutual issues.
Cost/Speed of Permit and Development Process	✓	The municipalities are competitive with respect to development charges and servicing costs.
Property Availability and Cost		
Commercial Building/ Land Availability	✓ ✗	Several existing sites are available in the downtown areas for commercial development. There are one or two larger areas in both major centres for larger development, but there is a lack of options for commercial land throughout the entire area.
Cost of Land/Lease Rates	✗	Land costs are high especially in McBride where options along the highway are very limited.
Incentives/Support Programs		

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Business Support	✓ ✗	There are CFDC centres in both Valemount and McBride with major program delivery coming from Prince George. While services are available there seems to be a lack of awareness of what programs are available and an unwillingness to disclose business plans to a local representative.
Education and Training		
Local Employment/Training Services	✓ ✗	The College of New Caledonia presents an Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism Program in Valemount. There are no other training based programs other than those offered by the CFDC offices.
Quality of Life		
Health Care Facilities	✓	Valemount has a health centre and McBride has a hospital offering full patient care with the exception of some speciality services. There are seniors housing and services available throughout the area but will require more services related to home care and extended care services in the near future.
Emergency Services	✓	Local fire and emergency services, with region-wide enhanced 911.
Crime Rate	✓	The Region has low crime rates compared to the province and has Police Detachments in McBride and Valemount, with a Crimestoppers and assault hotline.
Recreation and Cultural Facilities	✓	Canoe Valley Recreation Centre and the Robson Valley Recreation Centre are hubs of tourism and culture activities for the valley, with diverse recreational opportunities.
Marketing/Promotions/Information		
Visitor Marketing Initiatives	✓ ✗	Information is available online and in print copy but it does not stand out from the competition. A marketing strategy is important to plan the distribution of materials to parks and visitor information centres as well other areas frequented by tourists, on a four season basis. The new Valemount Visitor Information Centre is excellent.
Tourism Product Development Initiatives	✓	Considerable effort has been put into tourism development particularly in the Valemount area. Heli-skiing and snowmobiling have the potential as a world class product and would benefit from joint marketing and enhanced website development. More effort is needed in product development in the forest area of Crescent Spur and in summer activities and attractions including agri-tourism.

4.3 Moderate Future Economic Driver: Forestry & Wood Products

The local situation in Robson-Canoe Valleys reveals the difficulties that communities across the country have been experiencing - a declining forestry industry. Traditionally forestry has been the economic mainstay of the area.

The Fraser-Fort George region is home to many large lumber and pulp and paper mills, some of which have announced closures or output reductions. These mills in the region rely on the large Timber Supply Areas for production. The Annual Allowable Cuts have been increased recently for these areas in an effort to salvage timber that has been affected by the Mountain Pine Beetle.

Community Forests have been developed as a strategy to improve the local forestry market. They can be defined as any forestry operation managed by a local government, community group, First Nation or community-held corporation for the benefit of the entire community. Examples include community forestry agreements, forest licences, and tree farm licences. Three pillars of sustainable development define this concept: social, ecological and economic sustainability. The benefit in developing this kind of agreement is that it creates an atmosphere for long-term community economic development and increased self-reliance for rural communities. Community forests are different from other tenures because they are managed by the community, for the benefit of the community. Accountability levels are higher because they are responsible to the community such as friends, neighbours, family and children.

McBride, Valemount and Dunster have all developed Community Forest agreements, and in 2009 the Province of British Columbia passed Bill 13 into provincial legislation which eliminated the five year probationary period and allowed for all existing and new community forest agreements to move to a 25-year, renewable license[4]. In particular, this kind of agreement has allowed Valemount the right to harvest up to 40,000 cubic metres of timber per year within the Robson Valley timber supply area.

As shown in Figure 27 below, the communities in Fraser-Fort George are particularly vulnerable to the changes in the forestry sector, as they have developed a rather large dependence on this industry over time. While BC Stats (2009) identifies the dependence on forestry and wood processing in this area is between 23-33%, McBride's 2010-2015 Economic Action Plan identifies their forest vulnerability to be significantly higher at 37%.

Opportunities exist within the local industry to produce, promote and showcase a secondary industry, such as finished wood products. Other opportunities exist in non-commodity areas such as furniture components, paneling and flooring. The "BC Heartlands Economic Strategy" was recently completed and its recommendations aim to remove or reduce inefficient regulations, and increase critical areas such as access to timber, markets and certainty. It is hoped that this provincial initiative will attract investment and enhance sustainable forest practices[5].

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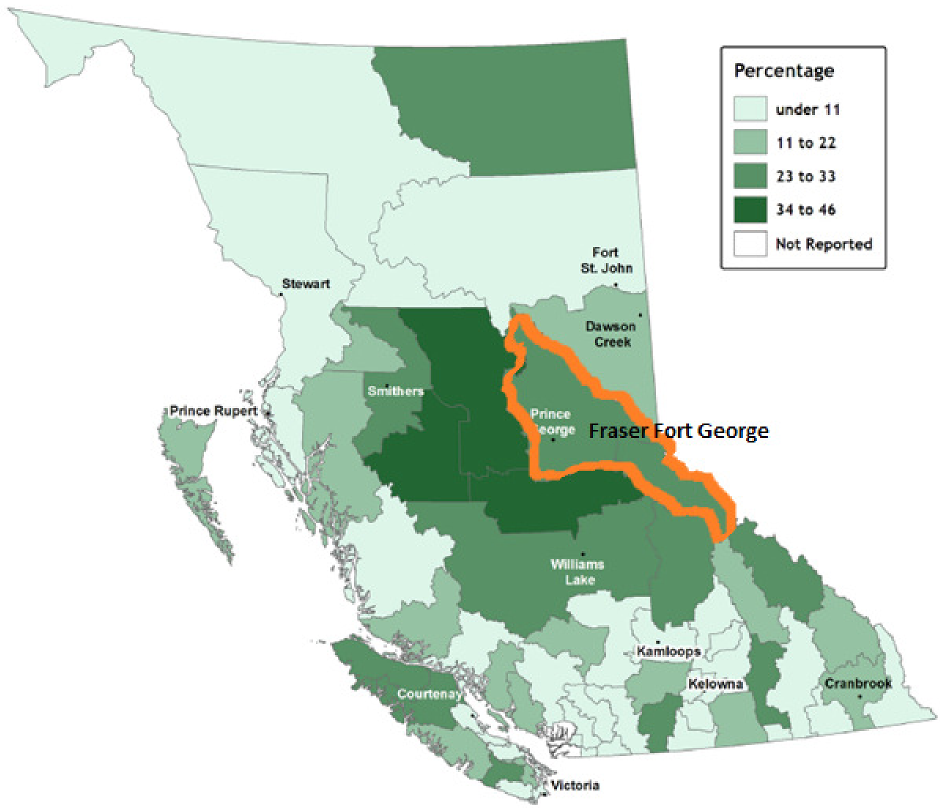
[4] British Columbia Community Forest Association (2010). www.bccfa.ca

[5] Community Futures Fraser-Fort George (2008). *Economic Outlook*. *www.* cfdc.bc.ca/uploads/File/Economic%20Outlook.pdf

New opportunities are also emerging in developing green energy. The Green Heat Initiative was introduced by the federal government to facilitate woody biomass energy development in Northern British Columbia by providing information and expertise to communities looking to develop green heating projects. By working together and collaborating with industry, rural and remote communities, citizens and governments can generate new woody biomass heating projects with long term benefits for the Northern British Columbia economy. Businesses and organizations in Robson-Canoe Valleys should consider becoming involved in this initiative, as it could provide assistance in:

- Determining what knowledge and expertise is required for communities and industries to fully adopt existing technologies
- Helping communities to understand how woody biomass energy can be utilized
- Facilitating the building of partnerships between communities, First Nations and governments to bring about mutually beneficial outcomes with green energy solutions
- Promoting the benefits of green heat energy use in Northern British Columbia.

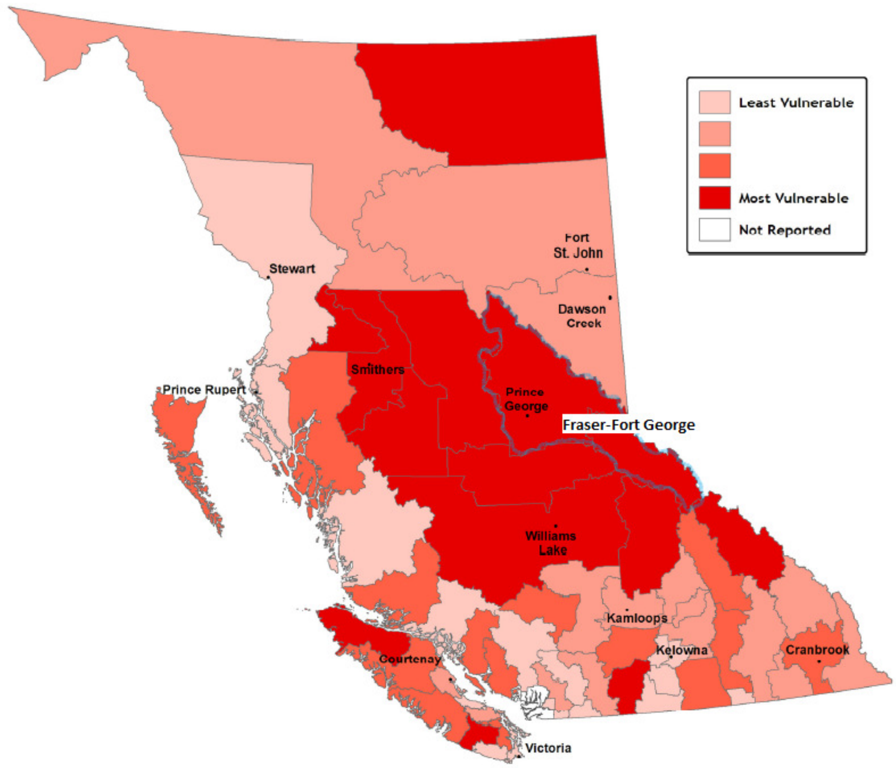
Figure 27: Dependence on Forestry and Wood Processing



Source: BC Statistics, 2009

As is shown below, the entire Fraser-Fort George area has a high dependence on forestry and wood processing (23-33%).   The forest vulnerability index is shown to be quite high for the Fraser-Fort George area. A high value indicates that if forest sector activity in the area declines, the area will experience greater economic difficulties than other areas in the province would under the same circumstances.

Figure 28: British Columbia Forest Sector Vulnerability



Source: BC Statistics, 2009

Summary of Macro-economic Conditions

The Canadian forest industry is currently facing a difficult time which involves major restructuring and has been affected very strongly by numerous economic downturns. In 2006, Canada and the United States implemented the 2006 Softwood Lumber Agreement. This agreement was introduced to end costly litigation, secure the return of the bulk of the duties paid to date by Canadian companies and provide some certainty for softwood lumber trade for the future.

Since then, worldwide conditions have dramatically decreased demand for forest products. Factors influencing today's weak demand for lumber include the U.S housing demand, declining demand for newsprint and high energy and wood fibre costs which have raised the costs of production.
British Columbia's situation is quite similar to the national downturn with the additional devastation that the mountain pine beetle has caused. According to the British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range, the mountain pine beetle has now killed a cumulative total of 675 million cubic metres of timber since the current infestation began. The cumulative area of British Columbia affected to some degree (red-attack and grey-attack) is estimated at 16.3 million hectares, which is approximately four times the size of

Vancouver Island[6]. As of 2009, between 11-30% (depending on location) of the pine in Robson-Canoe Valleys had been attacked, however, the range of this infestation spans from Fort St. John in the north, the Alberta Border to the east, Terrace to the west and the United States border to the south. Currently it is estimated by the Headwaters Forest District in McBride that 2/3 of the pine stands in the Timber Supply Area (TSA) have been affected by the mountain pine beetle which would be approximately 10% of the forest. The pine beetle infestation is a major issue and the Ministry of Forests and Range forecasts average reductions in long-term timber supply of 25% overall, and up to 60% in some areas once trees infected by the beetle are no longer suitable for existing uses. As much as 80% of the merchantable supply of pine in the province's central and southern interior could be killed by 2013.The short-term solution has been to significantly increase the allowable annual cut over the next decade.

The downturn in the forestry sector was first noticed in 2006, when U.S housing starts, which had peaked in the previous year's summer months, began to decrease[7]. Lumber prices shrank dramatically in response as producers, who had increased production to meet the record demand, continued to produce unwanted wood into a shrinking market. Problems deepened in 2007 in the United States with the subprime lending crisis. This sent a shock to the British Columbia economy, as production had to be cut as a result of decreased demand. Many companies in the province are struggling to stay open, and a large number have actually closed such as Pope & Talbot, which operated four sawmills and two pulp mills. Others like Canfor are decreasing workers by closing mills and cancelling shifts to preserve what cash they have remaining. The Vancouver Sun reported in 2009 that 34 mills in British Columbia had permanently shut and 89 were temporarily closed.

However, demand is beginning to recuperate and although experts do not expect the forest industry to return to pre-recession times until at least 2011, there is news of recovery. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, "B.C.'s forest sector made US$200 million in 2009, marking the first time it has enjoyed positive earnings since 2005"[8] The higher prices fetched by lumber, oriented strand board and pulp at the end of 2009 have spilled into early 2010, which is positive for Robson-Canoe Valleys, an economy which has traditionally been resource-based. Also, China recently adopted new building codes which allow wood-frame construction in Shanghai. This is a major advantage to Canada, as lumber prices are expected to increase in the second half of 2010.

To stimulate economic activity, FrontCounter BC has been created by the province to guide clients through the required authorizations, interpret land information, begin referral processes with First Nations and help identify market economic development opportunities[9].

In addition to this, the British Columbia Minister of Forests and Range has introduced two new tenure concepts to be implemented in 2010 – Stand-as-a-whole and Receiving Licence. Stand-as-a-whole pricing will allow tenure holders to pay a flat fee for each hectare to be harvested, rather than paying based on the timber that is cut, harvested and scaled on each site. Receiving license gives bio-energy, wood pellet and other alternative producers an annual allowable cut allocation which could be transferred to the tenure holder and be used to harvest lower-value logs to be chipped and used as a feedstock for

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[6] BC Ministry of Forests and Range, March 2010.

[7] Canada.com (Feb 2008). www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/story.html?k=66361&id=ccfb3fd4-af04-40dd-9a2d-c1ec84f99d90

[8] The Province (2010). "B.C. forestry sector is on its way to full recovery by 2011" www.theprovince.com/forestry+sector+full+recovery+2011/3016952/story.html

[9] BC Ministry of Forests and Range (2010). www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca

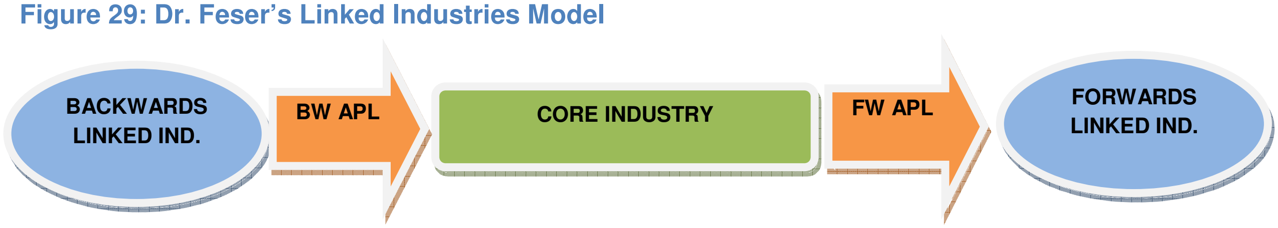
pulp, pellets, wood ethanol, bio-energy or other uses. These new tenure systems are intended to provide incentive to harvest all timber and force full utilization of the cut. It has been suggested that limitations to grow the bio-energy opportunities in the Fraser-Fort George area could be constrained at least in part by current Crown Land Use Policy, which allows multiple tenures to users whose needs are often conflicting.

Dr. Feser Sector Targeting and Industry Linkages

The potential for investment attraction and local growth in the Forestry and Value Added Wood Products Industry sector will depend largely upon potential linkages and opportunities arising from Robson-Canoe Valleys' existing businesses and sub-sector strengths. In order to better understand these linkages, a supply-chain methodology developed by Dr. Edward Feser at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champlain was used to analyze the supply-chain dynamics for two Food Processing and Advanced Chemical Manufacturing sub-sectors. This work measures the strength of inter-industry linkages, using a measure of 'average propagation length' (APL) to calculate the average number of steps it takes for investment in one industry to propagate and affect another industry[10]. This relationship is demonstrated graphically below.

It is important to note that the analysis below demonstrates the strength of linkages between linkages, but not the specific mechanisms or products that link industries. In most cases, this link will be intuitive, such as that between forest nurseries, forest products and timber tracts to logging. However, it should be noted that some presumably weaker linkages are also expressed as a result of this analysis, which lacks the mechanism for indicating the exact nature of relationships between industries.

Figure 29: Dr. Feser's Linked Industries Model



Dr. Feser's APL linkage framework has been applied to two subsectors, classified as sectors at the 4-digit National Industrial Classification System (NAICS) level, within the Forestry and Value Added Wood Products sector. This is done in order to better understand the backward (input) and forward (output) linkages into the sector, and inform business development activities moving forward. The two sub-sectors used are:

- Logging (NAIC 1133), a strong local employer
- Sawmills and wood preservation (NAIC 3211), a small local employer.

The findings of this exercise for these two industries are presented in the two tables below. The industries with the strongest linkages as determined by APL value are presented, as are the ranks of selected industries with demonstrated presence elsewhere in Robson-Canoe Valleys. The charts indicate the NAICS code for each linked industry, as well as the 'strength of linkage' rank for each backward and

[10] Dietzenbacher, E. and Romero, I. (2007) "Production Chains in an Interregional Framework: Identification by Means of Average Propagation Lengths" *International Regional Sciences Review*.

forward linked industry to the core industry. Linked industries interpreted as existing strengths or target priorities have been italicized to reflect areas of synergy in Robson-Canoe Valleys' economy.

Figure 30: Logging Industry Backward and Forward Linked Industries

Supplier Industries				Customer Industries		
NAICS Code	**Industry**	**Strength of Linkage (out of 180)**	**Core Industry: Logging (NAICS 1133)**	**NAICS Code**	**Industry**	**Strength of Linkage (Out of 180)**
1131	Forest nurseries, forest products, and timber tracts	1		1133	Logging	1
1133	Logging	2		1133	Sawmills and wood preservation	2
3211	Sawmills and wood preservation	3		3221	Pulp, paper and paperboard mills	3
8113	Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment (except automotive and electronic) repair and maintenance	5		3212	Veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing	4
5324	Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment rental and leasing	7		3219	Other wood product manufacturing	5
1110	Farms (1111 to 1129)	9		3371	Household and institutional furniture and kitchen cabinet manufacturing	6
4841-4842	Truck transportation	10		4821	Rail transportation	7
4111-4191	Wholesale trade	12		3222	Converted paper product manufacturing	8
4821	Rail transportation	20		3372	Office furniture (including fixtures) manufacturing	9
3219	Other wood product manufacturing	25		3274	Lime and gypsum product manufacturing	10

The chart above reveals the top ten linkages that appear when looking at industry suppliers and customers to the logging industry. Examples of strong supplier links include:

- Forest nurseries, forest products and timber tracts
- Sawmills and wood preservation
- Commercial/industrial machinery and equipment repair, maintenance, rental and leasing (excluding automotive and electronic)
- Truck transportation.

The highest ranked customer linkages include sawmills and wood preservation; pulp, paper and paperboard mills; and veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing. These linkages (ranked between 1 and 4) make sense, as typically for example, a logging industry would sell their product to sawmills to product woodchips which would be sold to a pulp and paper mill. A number of other linkages that are less obvious to the logging industry exist such as lime/gypsum product manufacturing.

Figure 31: Sawmills and Wood Preservation, Backward and Forward Linked

Supplier Industries				Customer Industries		
NAICS Code	**Industry**	**Strength of Linkage (out of 180)**		**NAICS Code**	**Industry**	**Strength of Linkage (Out of 180)**
3211	Sawmills and wood preservation	1	**Core Industry: Sawmills and Wood Preservation (NAICS 3211)**	3211	Sawmills and wood preservation	1
3219	Other wood product manufacturing	2		3219	Other wood product manufacturing	2
1133	Logging	3		3212	Veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing	3
3212	Veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing	4		4821	Rail transportation	4
4841-4842	Truck transportation	5		3221	Pulp, paper and paperboard mills	5
1131	Forest nurseries, forest products, and timber tracts	6		3371	Household and institutional furniture and kitchen cabinet manufacturing	6
4821	Rail transportation	7		3372	Office furniture (including fixtures) manufacturing	7
2211	Electric power generation, transmission and distribution	8		3391	Other miscellaneous manufacturing	8
4111-4191	Wholesale trade	11		2300	Construction	9
5617	Services to buildings and dwellings	13		3362	Motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing	11

The example (above) displays the forward and backward linkages for Sawmills and Wood Preservation. On the supplier side, strong linkages are seen between sawmills/wood preservation and wood product manufacturing and logging. Veneer, plywood and engineered wood product manufacturing ranks 4th as a strong supplier to sawmills. As Robson-Canoe Valleys looks to expand their forestry and value added industries (since the existing industry includes a sawmill) it should be noted that a strong linkage is indicated in forest nurseries, rail transportation and electric power generation, transmission and distribution.

It is likely that customers of the sawmill industry in Robson-Canoe Valleys would be wood product manufacturers (Veneer, plywood, engineered & other), as indicated by strong forward linkages. Other strong linkages include pulp and paper/paperboard mills, furniture/cabinet manufacturing, rail transportation and construction. A smaller, yet significant linkage is seen between sawmills and motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing.

These trends indicate that there are nascent opportunities for local supply-chain development and mutual business development and expansion within Robson-Canoe Valleys target sectors. The linkages above also confirm the strong relationship between forestry/value added wood products and manufacturing. This suggests potential for future cluster development in these areas.

SWOT Analysis

A summary of the areas forestry industry strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is displayed below.

Figure 32: Forestry SWOT Analysis

Source: Adapted from the McBride Economic Action Plan 2010-2015

4.4 Moderate Future Economic Driver: Senior Government Services

Including this target sector into the priorities for the Robson-Canoe Valleys recognizes the overall importance that these well paid services have on the local community. Based on the 2006 Census, there were 305 jobs within Robson-Canoe Valleys in healthcare, social services and education. Approximately 14.5% of the area's population is employed by this industry. It is recommended that the economic development focus be on both retention of existing service levels and attraction of new services.

Figure 33: Government Services in Robson-Canoe Valleys

Government Service	McBride	Valemount	Electoral Area H
Service BC		✓	
Hospital	✓		
Fire	✓	✓	✓
Police and RCMP (9-1-1)	✓	✓	✓
Ambulance	✓	✓	✓
Post-Secondary Education		✓	
Children & Family Development/Childcare	✓		
Forestry and Land Management		✓	
Court Services		✓	
Employment and Assistance Centre	✓		
Elementary School(s)	✓	✓	✓
Secondary School(s)	✓	✓	
Post-Secondary Education		✓	
*Area Office	✓	✓	
Liquor Store	✓	✓	
Provincial Park			✓
VIA Rail Canada	✓		

*Title of 'Area Office' is used on the British Columbia Government website, and lists three employees.

Retention is a critical part of the equation because government services, just like any business are looking for opportunities to cut the cost of service delivery, which sometimes means consolidation of offices. This is of particular interest to smaller communities such as Dunster, where declining populations has caused worry as to whether or not the local arts school will stay open.

It should be the goal of Robson-Canoe Valleys to not only ensure these services remain, but if consolidation does take place or if growth in budgets is predicted at a provincial level, it is important for Robson-Canoe Valleys to be seen as the preferred location for the new services. An example of this issue was discussed in community consultations, where residents suggested that the availability and use of VIA rail should be made more attractive to locals as well as tourists.

Niche opportunities could exist with the University of Northern British Columbia, College of New Caledonia or even institutions that are not close in proximity but would consider partnership in developing a satellite campus in the valleys. In 2009, the College of New Caledonia established a new business plan to continue their Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism (NORE) Program and expand upon tourism program opportunities. Offering additional programming in partnership with other institutions, such as the Royal Roads University in Victoria, who offers various tourism programs, and has two locations in Victoria, and one in Hong Kong should be explored.

Also on the attraction front, there may be an opportunities to attract federal and provincial facilities such as the recent efforts to attract a Federal Medium Security Prison in Valemount. This facility would bring much needed economic stimulus to the village and area by creating approximately 250 jobs with spin-off opportunities for increased consumer spending, direct/indirect employment and new educational opportunities. This facility, as suggested by a number of local supporters, would help address the overcrowding that is currently a major issue throughout British Columbia.

Figure 34: Investment Readiness: Senior Government Services

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Labour Force Characteristics		
Availability of Skilled Workers	✗	The levels of educational attainment are on average lower than that of the province. Also, a declining population has led to a declining available workforce.
Transportation and Distribution		
Proximity to Current/Future Customers	✓	Though this sector relies less on client and customer access, the aging demographics in the city and region coupled with the highway connections to larger centres suggest that the city is well-positioned in this sector.
Utilities		
Telecommunications	✓ ✗	The area recently completed expansion of broadband and cellular telephone service in McBride and Valemount. It covers a wide area using different wireless frequencies to cover line-of-sight and non-line-of-sight locations therefore most areas are accessible. However, the strength of the cellular signal and speed of broadband transmission is a common complaint amongst local residents.
Property Availability and Cost		

Critical Location Factor	Local Performance	Explanation
Commercial Building/ Land Availability		There is a shortage of available land along the District's Transportation Corridor as well as a shortage in land available for residential development. 95% of the vacant developable land in northern British Columbia is one acre or less in size. Valemount is in a better position than McBride in this regard.
Quality of Life		
Perception to Attract Employees		Though the quality of life is reported as high within the region and there are large employers in multiple sectors, there are larger regional centres (Prince George) that offer more services that are in competition with for workers.
Marketing/Promotions/Information		
Sector-Specific Website Promotions		Does not exist at this time
Sector-Specific Fact Sheets		Currently not available
Overall Investment Attraction Initiative		McBride's economic development website reflects a desire to attract new business and investment by providing links for site selectors, business resources, and a NW Corridor Manufacturing Strategy. Valemount's website is in need of revisions and additions regarding investment attraction.
Overall Investment Retention Initiative		Does not exist at this time

4.5 Moderate Future Economic Driver: Agriculture

Summary of Local Situation

The valley has a strong history in farming and a sense of pride in being a part of an agricultural community. Most areas of the valley can boast of good land and climate to make it an ideal area for future agricultural growth.

New assistance is now available under the Growing Forward Agreement of the Ministry of Agriculture which has made $553 million available to the province's agricultural sector. Included in this program are the Environmental Farm Planning program and the Beneficial Management Practices program in addition to the Farm Business Advisory Services program. Locally coops currently exist to assist in marketing and bulk purchasing and interest has been expressed to extend this purchasing to larger pieces of farm equipment.

Government regulations surrounding the practice of farm-gating has further handicapped the agricultural sector. Under the Food Protection Programs, the Ministry of Health Services has presented new guidelines for the sale of foods at temporary food markets. While they are designed to be an effective tool in enhancing consistency in farm markets, it is proving to be an impediment to those farmers who have traditionally made a significant part of their income from farmers markets or farm gate practices. These regulations apply to lower risk foods such as jams, baked goods as well as higher risk foods like eggs, raw meat, poultry and fish products. These new regulations are also affecting the tourism potential of the area by changing the ability of communities to hold community food related events (e.g. Dunster Ice Cream Social) as well as popular community farmers markets and agri-tourism opportunities.

In addition, new provincial meat inspection regulations state that that slaughter and processing of meats now have to be done only in provincially or federally licensed abattoirs. In the case of Fraser-Fort George, the closest abattoir is in Prince George. Transporting livestock to Prince George is expensive and time consuming and contributes to a less than perfect meat product in the end.

There is ample affordable farmland in the valley with reasonable access to markets. People in the area have a strong knowledge of agriculture and appreciate being able to make a living 'off the land'. Challenges in the industry include government regulations already discussed, utility reliability and costs and a lack of interest by younger people to see the industry as one that can sustain a family. The 2010-2015 McBride Economic Development Action plan has also identified commercial bio-energy based green house operations, poultry production, pork production for the Asian market and meat processing as potential opportunities in the area.

Non-Wood Forest Products and Blueberry Faming

Non-wood forest products (NWFP) refer to products of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded land or trees outside forests[11]. These can include medicinal herbs, fungi, edible fruits and nuts and other natural products.

Commercialization of non-wood forest products has become a method for development promoted by researchers, conservation and development organizations and, more recently, governments, to achieve rural livelihood improvement in an environmentally sound way.[12]

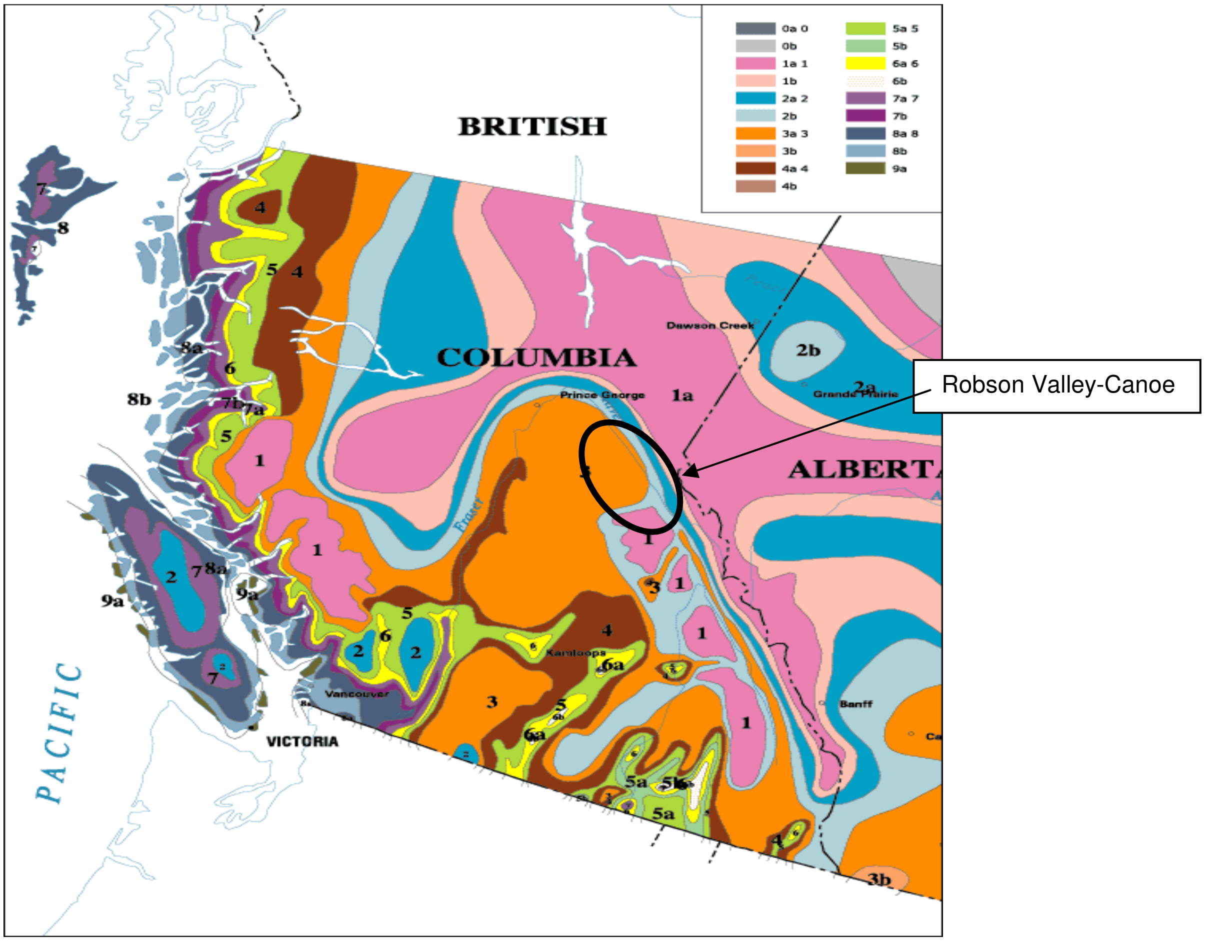
In British Columbia this sector is growing rapidly. In 1997 it contributed $600M to the economic diversification of the province with over 30,000 British Columbians earning all or part of their living from the sector. Today, over 200 species are harvested for sale, with mushrooms and floral greenery the largest “crops”. There is increasing interest in the potential of the wild-harvested nutraceutical and bio-products sub-sectors.

The "Buy BC Wild” directory was developed in 2007/08 and exists as a resource that lists hundreds of businesses and wild products from the province such as wild foods, native plants and natural heath care products. This directory could prove to be useful for Robson-Canoe Valleys when determining market feasibility of individual product opportunities. The British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range has conducted case studies for communities across the country that have developed a NWFP industry and is available for providing direction, advice and funding to support a variety of Centre for Non Timber Resources extension products.

Figure 35: Plant Hardiness Zones in British Columbia

[11] www.greenfacts.org. (2009).

[12] Wood, Fuelwood, and Non-Forest Wood Products (2008). www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.313.aspx.pdf



Source: Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. (2008). www.agr.gc.ca

Local consultation in Robson-Canoe Valleys brought about the opportunity to develop a market for growing and selling blueberries. This type of industry would allow local farmers to diversify their products as well create a 'regional speciality' market.

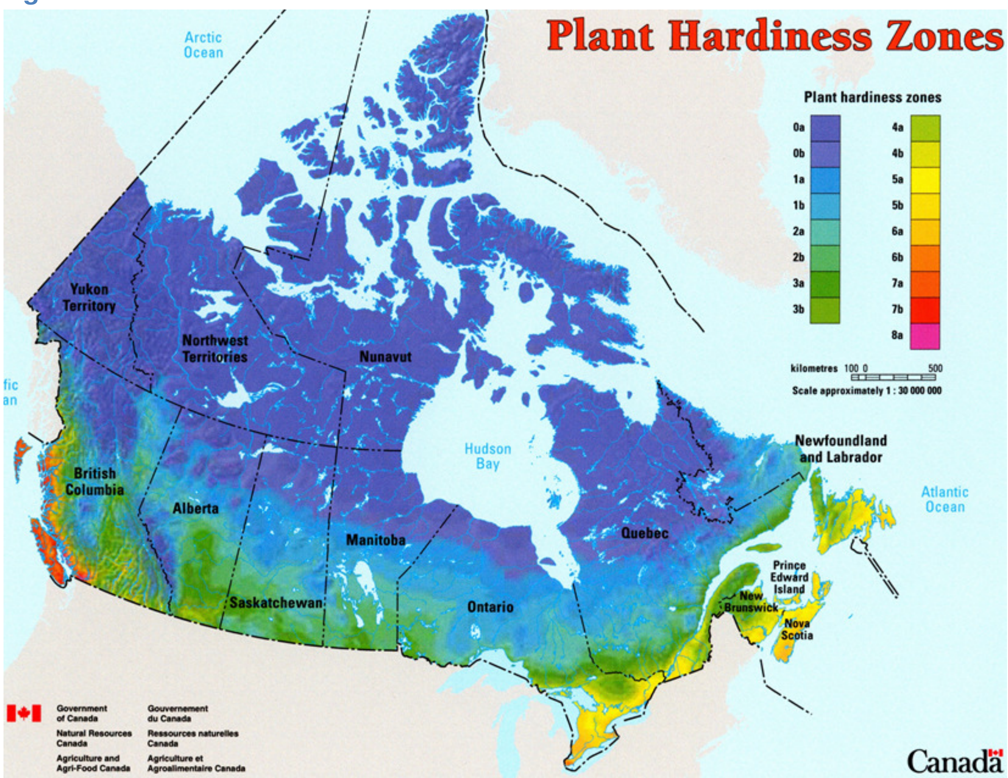
A demonstration of success in this market can be seen when looking at Nova Scotia, where the low bush blueberry plants grow wild all over the province, due to highly acidic soil. Their most common habitat is high, dry, thin, rocky soils where there is little or no tree growth. Many of the blueberry barrens in Nova Scotia are natural, having developed in areas where little else will grow. Others have grown on lands which have either accidently or purposely been destroyed by fire, or have been cleared and later abandoned. Although these berries grow all over the province, they are most abundant in Yarmouth, Cumberland and Guysborough counties[3].

The province of British Columbia boasts over 650 Blueberry growers who are represented by an umbrella organization called the BC Blueberry Council[4]. The province produces 95% of Canada's high bush blueberries and markets them to the United States and, Europe. This success, coupled with the degradation of the local forest due to the mountain pine beetle has created inspiration for low-bush

[3]"The History of the Lowbush Blueberry Industry in Nova Scotia, 1880 – 1950" (1997). nsac.ca/wildblue/hist/kinsman1880/ch1.htm
[4] B.C Blueberry Council (2009). www.bcblueberry.com/

blueberry farms amongst local residents. These types of berries would be ideal to grow in Robson-Canoe Valleys because of their cold hardiness (their ability to survive adverse growing conditions such as cold, heat, drought, or wind). Low-bush blueberries can be grown best in zones 2 through 6, while high-bush blueberries can be risky in Northern gardens and grow best in zones 4 through 7. Robson-Canoe Valleys is situated on land with a hardiness of 0-3 (see Plant Hardiness Zones map below) which would best suit a low-bush blueberry.

Figure 36: Plant Hardiness Zones in Canada



4.6 Other Sector Opportunities

4.6.1 Mining

The province of British Columbia is home to a wealth of mineral resources. The extraction and processing of these valuable minerals has attracted considerable investments to the province over the past 150 years. British Columbia has a significant amount of reserves of metals and aggregates and is considered to be one of the most promising mineral deposit locations in the world. According to the British Columbia government 2009 saw exploration mineral exploration activity in the Northeast of $20 million and the North-Central region had an estimated $28 million in mineral exploration activity[13].

The mining sector in Robson-Canoe Valleys consists of mainly exploration to extract shale type rock from quarries, which is mainly used for landscaping and small construction projects. Overall, the industry employs a small number of people locally. Hunterstone Quarries, located just outside Valemount has a low-level production of talus-derived quartzite dimension stone which is used in their log-home building[14].

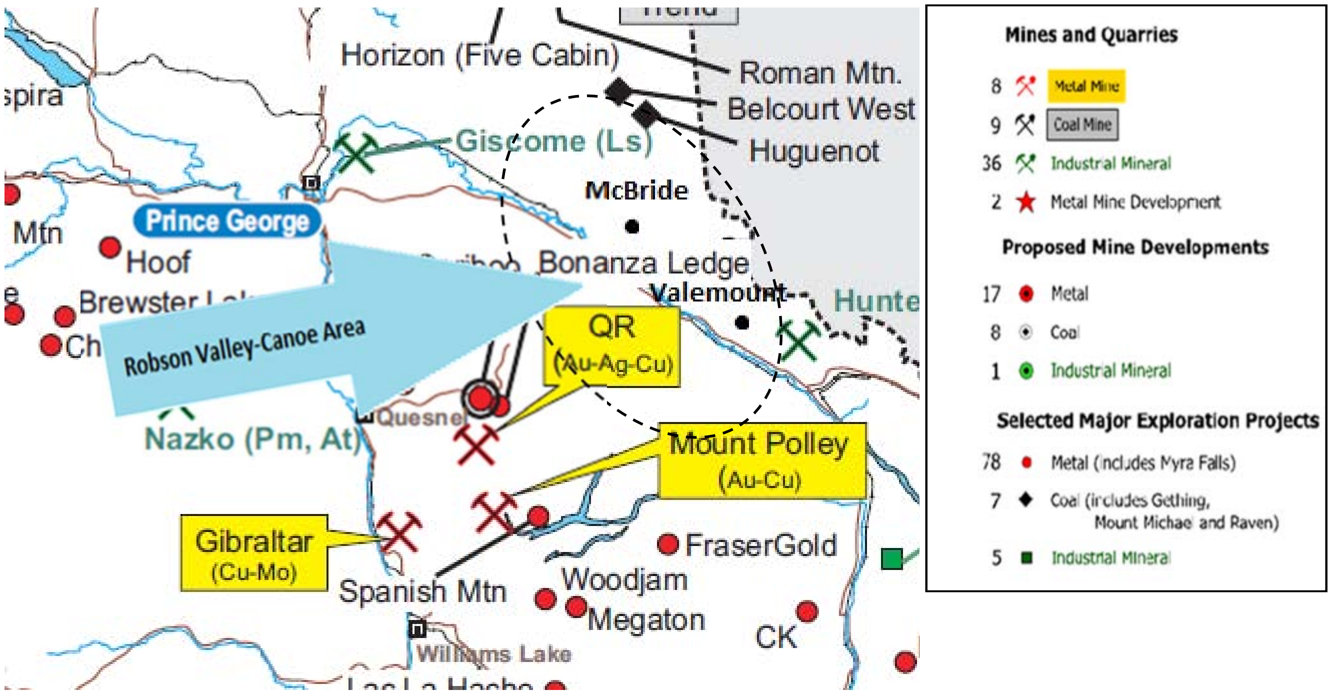
In close proximity to the Fraser-Fort George Region, there are a number of mines as well as proposed mine development and some major exploration projects. Figure 37 outlines a number of operating mines and selected major projects in British Columbia for 2007. Of particular interest is the area that is shown below as this represents mines/mining projects that are in proximity to the Fraser-Fort George Region. Mining taking place around the Fraser-Fort George region consists of mainly metal and some industrial mineral excavation and exploration. These include:

- **Mines and Quarries**
  - Kemess Mine-Gold and copper open pit mine
  - Giscome-Industrial mineral mine
  - Barkerville Gold Mines Ltd-gold mine
  - Mount Polley-Metal mine
- **Proposed Mine Developments**
  - Bonanza Lodge-Metal
  - Mt. Milligan - Gold and copper
- **Selected Major Exploration Projects**
  - Craze CK-Metal mine
  - Blue River- (Upper Fir, Fir, & Verity) Industrial mineral
  - Spanish Creek-Metal
  - Spanish Mountain

[13] British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources (2010). www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010EMPR0001-000034.htm

[14] Hunterstone Quarries (2010). hunterstonequarries.com/HunterstoneQuarry.html

Figure 37: Operating Mines and Selected Major Exploration Projects in Proximity to Robson-Canoe Valleys (2009)



As is shown above, there are a number or exploration projects going on in proximity to Robson-Canoe Valleys. Specific projects (either in exploration, proposed, or actual mines/quarries) are listed below because of their opportunity and proximity to Robson-Canoe Valleys.

Northgate Minerals owns and operates the Kemess mine which is a large open-pit gold and copper operation. It is located approximately 430 km northwest of Prince George. It is a fly in/fly out operation with a 5,000' lighted airstrip, 540 room camp and flights are provided from Vancouver, Kelowna, Kamloops, Williams Lake, Prince George and Smithers. While this mine would not allow for local commuting for workers by personal vehicle from Robson-Canoe Valleys, it would allow for increased job opportunities as well as an opportunity to build a bedroom community for workers who are flying in and out of the mine site.

The Upper Fir, Fir and Verity tantalum and niobium deposit at the Blue River project (Approx. 175 km south of Robson Valley) indicates resources of 7,384,000 tonnes of tantalum. This company conducted rock and soil sampling, and geophysical surveys in 2006/2007 and found that the area contains high anomalous concentrations of niobium and rare earth elements[15]. A 2009 update indicated that the deposit is a large and well defined. It will have the tonnage to provide long term stable supply for the tantalum and electronics industry while providing a solid foundation to move the deposit into development. This development could allow Robson-Canoe Valleys access to new jobs, as well as the opportunity to build an electronics industry.

[15] Resource World Magazine (n.d) www.slideshare.net/CommerceResources/resource-world-bc-mining

The Giscome-Graymont exploration project is located about 27 km northeast of Prince George. The location was selected for the abundant reserves of high quality limestone, proximity to markets, and proximity to transportation infrastructure. The Lime Plant would be located adjacent to the CN railway, on a former CN ballast quarry site that is being purchased by Graymont. The Quarry operation would be located about 7 kilometres from the Plant Site on Crown land where Graymont holds mineral claims. Recent exploration efforts have demonstrated enough limestone reserves to allow Graymont to operate at this site for many decades. Partnerships could be formed between Robson-Canoe Valleys and Graymont to explore additional uses for limestone such as to remove sulphur oxides from flue gases, neutralise acids pollutants (like hydrochloric & hydrofluoric acids), remove sulphur oxides and adsorb most of the heavy metals present in the flue gases from plants. Limestone is also used in pulp production, roadway building/improvement, and soil stabilization.

4.6.2 Alternative Energy

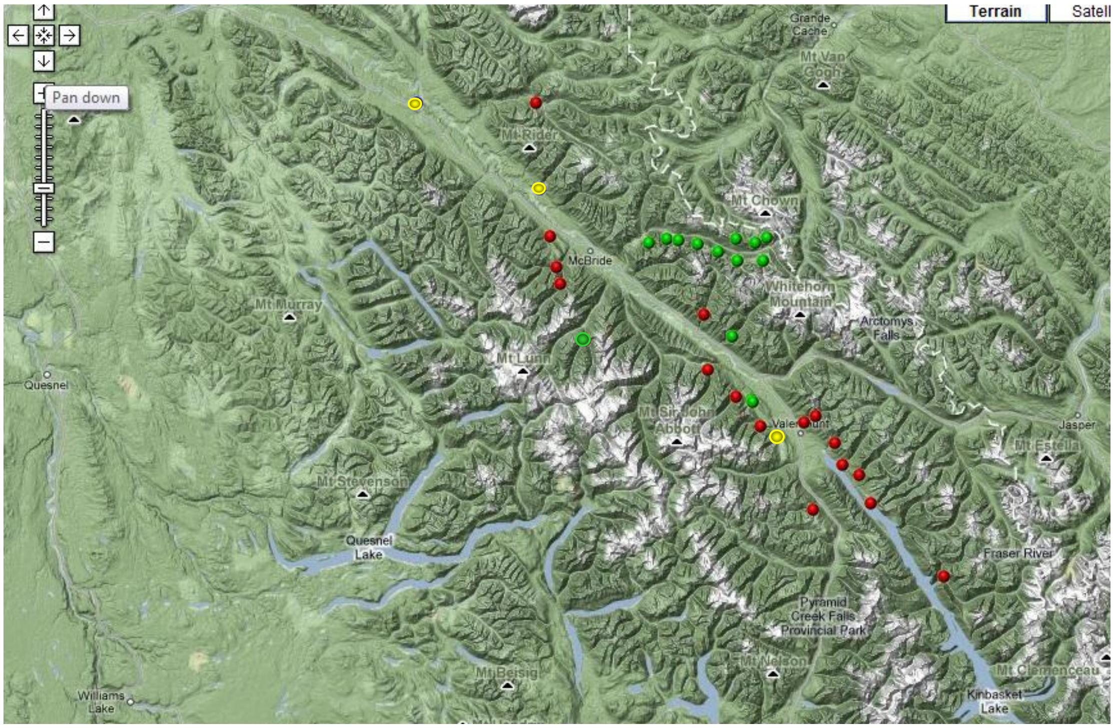
British Columbia's Clean Energy Act pushes the province towards being an unrivalled clean energy powerhouse, powered by unprecedented investments in clean and renewable energy and strict measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Small Hydro Run of River

The Robson Valley is well suited for the development of small scale mini-Hydro developments utilizing 'run of the river' technology. This involves diverting a small portion of the water from an existing creek or small river into a pipeline and then through a small turbine, before returning the water to the creek. These small scale projects typically produce from 1 to 10 MW of power and are being promoted by BC Hydro under their Clean Energy power program. These run of the river projects produce the majority of their power in the spring and early summer months when the rivers are running their fastest with the spring snow melt.

Studies have indicated that the Robson Valley has the potential to produce over 100 MW of power from these small scale independent projects. By comparison, the proposed Site C dam will have an output of 900 MW. According to Private Power Watch (www.ippwatch.info) as of March 2010, in British Columbia there are currently 145 Independent Power Project (IPP) licenses granted, and another 628 applications currently under review. Of these, there are 35 licenses or applications in the Fraser Fort George Regional District, most of which are in the Robson Valley.

Figure 38: Independent Power Project Licenses and Applications in Fraser-Fort George



Colour codes for dots:

- Yellow – active sites producing power
- Red – active applications
- Green – sites that have been granted water licenses but awaiting applications

There are currently several IPP projects in the Valley that have had water licenses granted and are in the process of going through the various environmental and interconnection studies required as part of the process. Some of these projects include:

Holmes Hydro IPP

This proposed project consists of 11 sites on the Holmes River, 70 km northwest of Valemount and 12 km east of McBride, with a potential capacity of 85 MW. In order to bring this project online, a 70 km 138 kV transmission line would have to be constructed to connect the project to the BCTC substation in Valemount[16].

Generex Hydro Inc IPP

This project consists of two 1.75 MW turbines on Small Creek producing 3.2 MW, midway between McBride and Valemount.

Castle Mountain Hydro IPP

This recently approved project consists of a site on the Benjamin Creek, south of McBride producing 6 MW from a single turbine.

[16] British Columbia Transmission Corporation (2007). *Feasibility Study for Holmes Hydro IPP Project.*

Snowshoe Hydro

This proposed project consists of a site on the McIntosh Creek, 12 km northwest of McBride producing 1.2 MW from a single turbine.

EcoTech Energy Group Inc. - Biomass

This proposed biomass project, presently under consideration, to be located in McBride would use wood waste to produce both heat and power. Potential uses for the heat produced could be greenhouses for fresh vegetable production, heating for buildings and industrial uses and even inland fish farms. EcoTech estimates that up to 35 MW of energy could be produced, along with other carbon based products such as pelletized carbon.

Large Hydro

The provincial government's decision to proceed with the Site C clean-energy project will provide significant opportunities and economic benefits to northern British Columbia. For Robson-Canoe Valleys this could mean out-of-community employment or services and products provided by businesses.

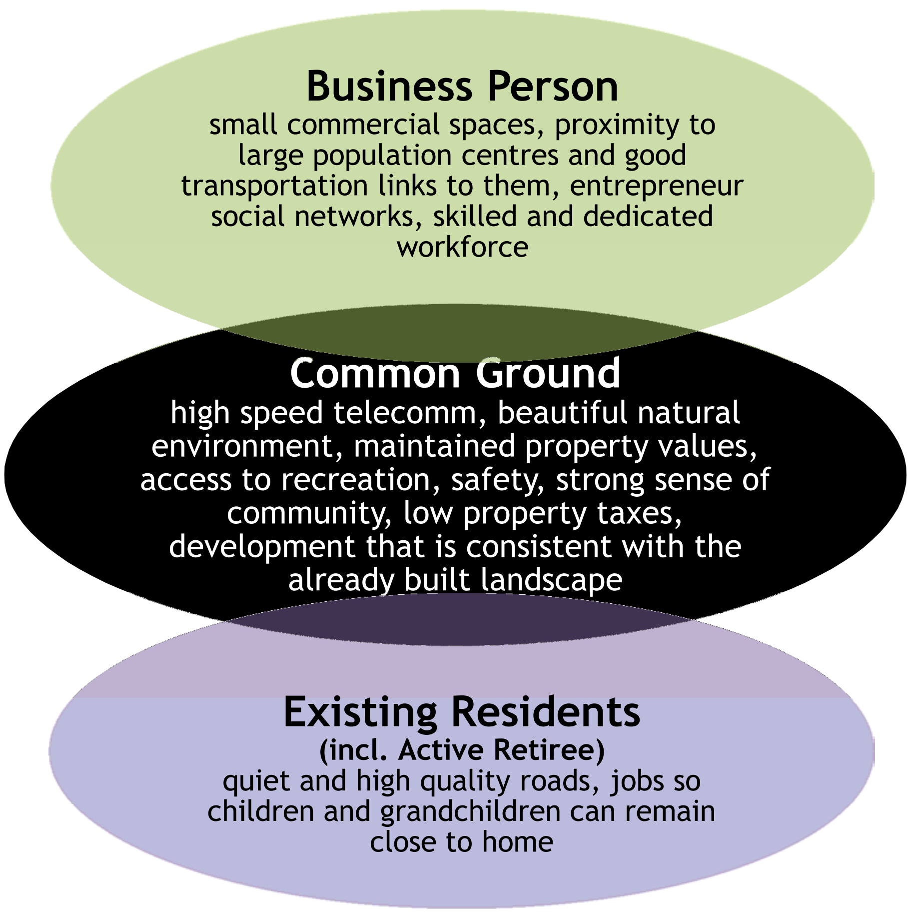
Site C will result in 7,650 person-years of employment during the construction phase and will produce 35,000 direct and indirect jobs during the life of the project. That means numerous opportunities, large and small, for northern communities and First Nations.

5 Acknowledging Shared Opportunities – "The Sweet Spot"

Robson-Canoe Valleys is a community of many different interests – long-time residents and families who have lived in the area for generations, newcomers from urban centres and returning sons and daughters, seasonal residents, local business enterprises, churches and community groups, retirees and young families. All of these groups have their own unique needs and priorities and cherished hopes for the future. Robson-Canoe Valleys serves a mosaic of interests, not a single uniform body of residents and taxpayers. Sometimes those interests can appear to be at odds when it comes to economic development strategies.

However, there is a strong interconnection between the needs and wants of residents and business people.

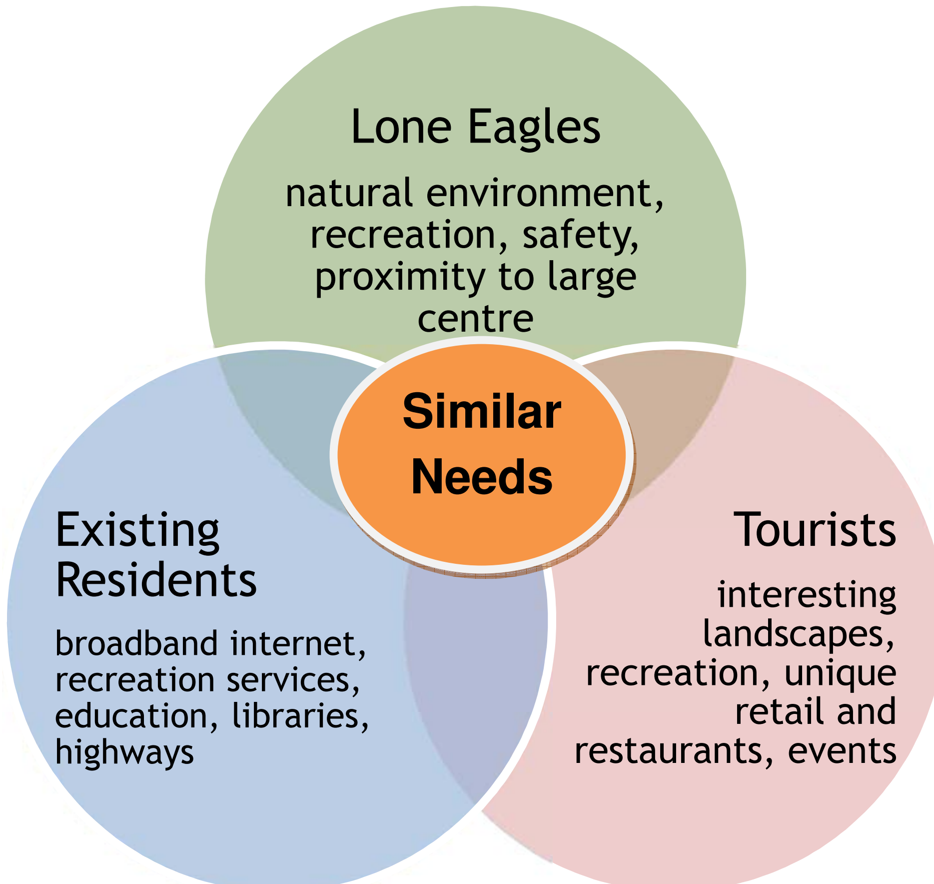
Figure 39: Acknowledging Shared Interests and Needs



It is possible to take the above figure, change "Business Person" to Lone Eagle and add a third dimension – the visitor. By doing this we begin to understand where there is common ground on all three fronts. It is at the points of convergence, where the fringes of multiple sectors begin to merge, that a community has unique competitive advantages.

When one examines the needs of Lone Eagles more closely, it becomes obvious that they are similar to those of visitors and existing residents. This concept is shown in the graphic below.

Figure 40: Convergence of Needs for Lone Eagles, Tourists and Existing Residents



This concept becomes a focus for the use of limited resources. By concentrating effort where all three needs overlap, the communities of Robson-Canoe Valleys will get more "bang for their buck" and positively affect the lives of multiple stakeholders.

6 Specific Infrastructure Challenges

6.1 Seniors Services

Government and social leaders in Fraser Fort George have been forced to take a serious look at the services available in the region for an aging population. As per Figure 7, between 2001 and 2006 the population of those age 55 and over grew, which was the only segment of the population to experience an increase. At the same time, the age demographic of 25 – 44 saw the biggest decline in population, in all likelihood due to changes in the job market and an outmigration from the area to find employment elsewhere. This combination has created a dilemma given that there are growing numbers of seniors in the area, with fewer people in the working age category to provide services to seniors and fewer residents available to contribute to community growth.

In April of 2009 an announcement was made to add 18 new modular housing units for seniors and persons with disabilities to be built in Valemount and McBride. This number has now been modified to include 10 units for each community. This program is part of the new Seniors Rental Housing Initiative which will create up to 1,000 new housing units across the province of British Columbia. A side benefit of this initiative is that the units will be built with local wood and labour.

Services are available in varying degrees throughout the valley but there are common issues which create a common bond of need for seniors' services and a variety of housing options.

After filling the 10 new housing units, Valemount may still have a waiting list for more housing. While the new units will meet the demand for the present, it will be important to keep a watchful eye out for future needs before they rise to a critical point. Another issue affecting senior's care in Valemount is the lack of a full service hospital although there are four physicians to provide medical services from a local clinic.

Without a hospital in Valemount, the availability of long term care is nonexistent. In addition, there is limited home support and home care services in general which would allow residents to stay in their homes for a longer period of time if such services were available. During the stakeholder process it was felt that an increasing number of older residents are now leaving their homes because one of the partners has to be relocated to extended home care and the remaining partner understandably wishes to be in close proximity.

Through the assistance of volunteers, Valemount has an excellent social structure for seniors including table games, shuffle board, cards, as well as music and theatre at the local schools.

McBride has a hospital facility with seven extended care beds. They have a hospital pharmacy which has plans to expand and several programs to assist seniors including:

- Old Age Pensioners Organization which organizes bingos, fitness, carpet bowling, hiking, etc.
- Day/overnight trips for 14-20 participants to cultural activities
- Literacy program which provides help with reading/writing i.e. reading mail, completing forms, etc.

Issues surrounding transportation are common to all areas of Robson-Canoe Valleys. Better coordination is needed for specialist care with the bus service days provided by Northern Health. In addition, while the communities are geographically small, getting around town to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, etc can be problematic without the assistance of friends or family. Because of a strong sense of community and support for neighbours it may be possible to organize volunteers to be 'on call' for scheduled and emergency transportation needs for residents in all areas of the valley.

There is a lack of speciality care in the valley. These speciality services include therapists who provide complimentary health care that is very important in many cases to patient recovery and ongoing health wellness. Local health boards should work with the Provincial Health Officer of the Ministry of Health Services to provide visiting services on a regular and rotational basis to the two larger centres of McBride and Valemount.

Ultrasound services are currently not available and should be considered for the McBride Hospital which would then serve the entire valley area. Residents currently travel to Prince George for this service which can be a considerable hardship on a patient that would benefit from a reduced travel period and less tiring journey to receiving screening services.

As previously noted, there is insufficient home care services in the valley. These services would provide assistance to residents who have acute, chronic, palliative or rehabilitative health care. Services also include meal programs, residential care services and hospice care. While home care will not provide total care for the patient, they do provide support to make it possible for them to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible reducing the impact on hospitals and keeping residents as part of the community. Respite care is also needed in the valley. Respite care is the provision of short-term, temporary relief to those who are caring for family members who might otherwise require permanent placement in a facility outside the home.

It has also been noted that home care and assistance is needed for those who are physically challenged and may need assistance in the form of ramps and other household modifications to make independent living possible. Efforts should be made to ensure that a quantity of the homes previously announced under the Seniors Rental Housing Initiative is dedicated to assisting handicapped individuals.

The lack of extended care beds in the valley cannot be overstated. While there are currently 7 beds available at the McBride Hospital, this does not meet the needs of the valley and is a considerable distance from Valemount residents, again causing travel issues and stress to family units who are separated and unable to keep in touch on a regular basis.

Anecdotal opinion is that it is hard to attract more health care workers to the area due to a lack of 'professional' employment for spouses as well as convenient and essential community services and shopping.

Senior services are available through several government agencies including SeniorsBC.ca and the Seniors Healthy Living Network through the Seniors Healthy Living Secretariat. Having said this, often seniors need assistance to work through the process and get the assistance they need and deserve. Regional and municipal health providers should consider establishing a valley wide committee comprised of health professionals, volunteers, residents and seniors organizations who are mandated to identify issues and recommend solutions based on local need. Strong collaboration throughout the valley is needed to ensure that services can be delivered to all residents. This organization could also be a point of contact for seniors seeking advice on programs or assistance or to pass on comments and suggestions.

There is a basic level of service for seniors in the valley. There are no critical or urgent issues, but with a growing older population, care must be taken to ensure careful planning through annual reviews for seniors residential and community services as well as the provision of essential services for new 'active retirees'.

Summary of recommendations:

- Monitor housing needs on an annual basis
- Investigate feasibility of long term care centre in Valemount
- Apply for funding for more home support care (residential)
- Research ways to provide a reliable local transportation system
- Lobby for ultrasound services at McBride hospital
- Work with Northern Health Care to provide a more convenient schedule of 'specialist' days in Prince George
- Research ways to provide respite care for the area
- Handicapped care
- Establish a coalition of health care workers/organizations/interested persons to meet regularly and monitor health care issues in the valley and report to their regional health board

6.2 Land Assessment

Much of a community's economic growth will occur on lands designated for industrial and commercial uses. The Downstream and Upstream Community Official Plans were reviewed to determine the objectives and permitted uses for industrial and commercial development in Electoral Area H, Village of McBride and Village of Valemount.

6.2.1 Downstream Land Use Planning and Industrial and Commercial Development

Robson-Canoe Valleys Downstream Official Community Plan

Section 2.1.f of the Official Community Plan lays out the commercial and industrial objectives. These objectives are:

i. To provide for the continuance and development of commercial land uses to meet the convenience and recreational needs of local residents and the travelling public.
ii. To promote a strong and stable regional economy by providing for industrial land requirements to accommodate the needs of new or expanding industrial activities that augment existing development and plans of neighbouring communities.
iii. To encourage the Village of McBride as the industrial and commercial centre for the region.
iv. To promote an orderly sequence of future industrial and commercial development compatible with neighbouring land uses and transportation facilities.
v. To provide for small scale industrial uses and home based business to encourage local employment opportunities, without contradicting objective 2.1.f (iii).
vi. To recognize that resource extraction industries are often best located in rural areas close to the resource. (pp. 9-10)

The Plan groups land use designations and policies into the following categories:

- Agriculture/Resource (Ag/Res)
- Agriculture/Resource 2 (Ag/Res2)
- Rural Holdings (RH) and Rural Residential (RR)
- Settlement Centre (SC)
- Local, Recreational and Highway Commercial (LC, RC and HC)
- Light Industrial/Heavy Industrial (IND/L, IND/H)
- Public Development/Institutional (PD/I)

Non-residential uses can occur on Agriculture/Resource, Agriculture/Resource 2, Rural Holdings and Rural Residential and Public Development/Institutional lands in the form of agriculture, forestry and other resource extraction, home business, institutional and church uses. However, the remainder of the discussion focuses on industrial and commercial uses for Settlement Centre, Local, Recreational and Highway Commercial and Industrial designations.

In Section 4.5.2, the Plan states that settlement centres will generally be the main recipients of future non-residential development in the Plan area to service the needs of adjacent residential development. In the settlement centre designation permitted uses include commercial (LC, RC and HC) and rural/service industrial. Rural/service industrial uses shall generally be limited to:

i. Logging/trucking contractors
ii. Automobile/equipment repair
iii. Equipment/animal auction yard, public
iv. Works yard, household goods repair

v. Greenhouse, nursery, agricultural
vi. Products processing (not including an abattoir)
vii. Limited resource processing. (Section 4.7.4.i, p.28).

Section 4.6.3 states that within the local commercial (LC) designation the use of land shall generally be limited to:

i. Retail and service outlets catering to the needs of local residents including but not limited to: general/convenience store, post office, gasoline sales and service station, arts/crafts sales, restaurant and neighbourhood pub
ii. Residential. (p.26).

Within the recreational commercial (RC) designation the use of land shall generally be limited to:

i. Commercial or public uses intended to provide mostly outdoor recreational opportunities including, but not limited to campground, recreational lodge or resort, golf course and ski-hill
ii. Recreational airport, race track, drive-in theatre, roller rink and similar commercial recreational facilities
iii. Residential. (Section 4.6.5, p.27).

Section 4.6.4 states that within the highway commercial (HC) designation the use of land shall generally by limited to local commercial uses and:

ii. Other commercial uses catering to the travelling public including, but not limited to, restaurant and overnight tourist accommodation of a hotel/motel type use which do not necessarily associate with outdoor recreational opportunities. (p.26).

Within the light industrial (IND/L) designation the use of land shall be generally limited to rural and service industrial uses and:

ii. Manufacturing and warehousing/storage uses which are not associated with significant noise levels or emissions to the air, land or water
iii. A floor space maximum of 1,000 square metres (10,760 sq. ft.) for buildings utilized in the light industry. (Section 4.7.5, p.29).

Within the heavy industrial (IND/H) designation the use of land shall generally be limited to:

i. Light industrial uses listed in Section 4.7.5 with no maximum floor space
ii. Sawmill, planer mill, pulp mill and other timber or wood product processing and manufacturing uses
iii. Mining, minerals processing and related industry
iv. Other heavy industrial uses including abattoirs, petroleum storage and processing or utility complexes, vehicle and equipment salvage
v. Additional residential accommodation for staff if the use location is relatively remote from a residential settlement. (Section 4.7.6, p.29).

Robson-Canoe Valleys Upstream Official Community Plan

The commercial and industrial objectives for the Upstream area are very similar to the Downstream Official Community Plan. The only changes being:

i. To support the Village of Valemount as the commercial centre for the region
ii. To provide for small-scale industrial uses and home business to encourage local employment opportunities, without contradicting the objective to support the Village of Valemount as the industrial and commercial centre for the region
iii. To recognize tourism as a viable industry in the area, and to provide tourism opportunities while retaining the importance of the Village of Valemount as the commercial centre and the forest industry as an equal and complementary industry. (Section 2.1.g, p.36).

The land use designations are also similar to the Downstream Plan with additional uses being limited to Resort Commercial (RESORT-COM) and Future (F).

Non-residential uses can occur on agriculture/resource, rural holdings and rural residential and public development/institutional lands in the form of agriculture, forestry and other resource extraction, home business, institutional and church uses. However, the remainder of the discussion focuses on industrial and commercial uses for local, recreational, highway, and resort commercial (LC, RC, HC, RESORT-COM), and industrial designations (IND/L, IND/H).
The land use designations for the local commercial (LC), recreational commercial (RC), highway commercial (HC), light industrial (IND/L) and heavy industrial (IND/H) have nearly the same permitted uses.

Section 7.5 of the Plan states that the resort commercial (RESORT-COM) designation's intent is to identify lands suitable for a large-scale resort use. The Plan states:

> *A large-scale resort would typically be developed around and in conjunction with a specific attraction. The attraction would be seen as the impetus of the resort and could include such attractions as a ski-hill, gondola, golf course, guest ranch, hot springs, spa and other resource based recreational attraction*. (p.19).

The Plan continues to state that within the Resort Commercial designation, the use of land shall generally be limited to:

a. A major attraction which may include, but is not limited to ski-hills, gondolas, golf courses, guest ranches, hot springs spa and other resource based recreational attraction
b. Commercial uses intended to provide accommodation and services in conjunction with such major attractions
c. Residential accessory to the major attraction use. The development of a residential subdivision that is not accessory to the major attraction is not supported
d. Local commercial uses as set out in Section 7.2 a) [Local commercial uses] *as accessory to the recreational attraction*
e. *Recreation commercial uses as set out in Section 7.4 a)* [Recreation commercial uses].

Village of McBride Official Community Plan

The Village of McBride's objective for commercial uses is to provide for a consistent development of commercial land uses to meet the needs and convenience of local residents and the travelling public. For industrial uses, the Village's Official Community Plan states the objective is to support small scale industrial uses to encourage local employment opportunities. The Plan continues to state that special industrial uses that may have the potential for environmental degradation, such as pulp mills, steel mills, MDF plants and disposal sites for special industrial wastes are not included in the industrial designations.

The land use designations for commercial lands include highway commercial, local commercial and Main Street commercial.

In Section 9.1, the Plan states that within the Highway Commercial designation, the primary use of land will generally be limited to:

i. Store, post office, fuel and service station, food services, restaurant, accommodation and other commercial uses intended to serve the travelling public
ii. Campground, recreational lodge, or resort, golf course, driving range, and other commercial uses intended to provide mostly outdoor recreation opportunities
iii. Residential, only as an accessory to an established commercial use. (p.18).

In Section 10.1, the Plan states that within the Local Commercial designation, the primary use of land will generally be limited to:

i. Retail and service outlets catering to the needs of local residents including, but not limited to, coffee shop, general/convenience store, post office, neighbourhood pub, arts and crafts sales, post office, restaurant, office
ii. Residential. (p.19).

In Section 11.1, the Plan states that within the Main Street Commercial designation, the primary use of land will generally be limited to:

i. Store, post office, accommodation, fuel and service station, food services, restaurant, neighbourhood pub, retail and office commercial, and other commercial uses intended to serve Village residents and tourists alike
ii. Residential; only as an accessory to an established commercial use

Public development uses are also permitted in Highway Commercial and Main Street commercial designations as long as the primary use is limited to community recreation facility, school, waste disposal and treatment site, park, government office, cemetery, church and other similar public uses.

The land use designations for industrial lands include light industry and heavy industry.

The Plan states that within the Light Industrial designation, the primary use of land shall be limited to:

i. Logging/trucking contractors, vehicle and equipment repair – excluding vehicle bodyworks, equipment yard, public works yard, household goods repair, agricultural products processing – not including an abattoir, limited resource processing
ii. Manufacturing, warehouse and storage uses which are not associated with significant noise levels or emissions to the air, land or water
iii. Residential. (Section 13.1, p.22).

Within the Heavy Industrial designation, the primary use of land shall be limited to:

i. Light Industrial uses as set out in Section 13.0
ii. Residential
iii. Sawmill, planer mill, and other wood processing and manufacturing uses
iv. Mining, mineral processing, and other similar uses
v. Abattoirs, vehicle bodyworks shops, fuel storage, processing or utility complexes, salvage/wrecking yards. (Section 14.1, p.23).

Village of Valemount Official Community Plan

The Village of Valemount Official Community Plan states the objective of commercial development is to:

- Foster and strengthen commercial development to meet the needs of Valemount residents and visitors.
- Designate an adequate amount of land for central business district, highway, tourist and service commercial uses.
- Better link the various commercial areas within Valemount.
- To improve the visual appearance of the Village's commercial areas. (Section 6.2, p.16).

The Central Business District is recognized as the principal local business and retail focus of the community. The Plan's policy is to encourage a broad range of retail, personal service, office, financial, entertainment and similar commercial uses in this District.

A part of the commercial development area is the Main Street Special Planning Area that contains a mix of uses. These uses include housing, meeting halls, a church, a library, a hotel, a service repair shop and other businesses. The Village of Valemount's Council objective is to recognize the special mix of uses in the Main Street area and to work to ensure these and future uses are compatible.

Highway and tourist commercial designated lands include motels, restaurants, gas stations and other services. Service commercial activities include uses such as automotive repair shops, welding shops and commercial fuel facilities.

Having defined the commercial and industrial designations and land uses in the Downstream and Upstream areas of Electoral Area H, Village of McBride and Village of Valemount, the next section will address the available supply of these land uses. By understanding the supply of these lands provides an indication of a community's capacity to accommodate additional commercial and industrial development.

6.3 Available Industrial and Commercial Property

Existing industrial and commercial land is both developed and vacant. For the purpose of this study the definition for existing industrial and commercial lands means land designated by a local government Official Community Plan or zoning bylaw, or land currently being used for industrial or commercial use.

It is noted that the determination of the existing industrial and commercial land and the vacant status of lands was a particularly subjective exercise. In discussions with municipal staff, vacant lands and the approximate area in acres were identified for all three municipal areas. The information is supplemented with commercial and industrial building permit activity to indicate the level of investment occurring on these lands in the municipal areas.

Electoral Area H

Electoral Area H has 2,786 acres of industrial and commercial lands. Much (1,378 acres) of the commercial lands are designated for recreation commercial uses. The majority (856 acres) of industrial uses are used for heavy industry. Light industry accounts for 268 acres. The industrial and commercial lands in this electoral area are not serviced with municipal water and sewer lines.

Commercial and industrial investment has on average been limited to three or four building permits from 2006 to 2009. Building investment over the previous two years has averaged around $600,000.

Village of McBride

The Village of McBride has the majority (82 acres) of its commercial lands designated for highway commercial uses. Main Street Commercial accounts for nearly all of the remaining commercial lands as local commercial uses account for a very small portion of land. Heavy and light industrial uses are nearly split evenly with 33 acres and 27 acres respectively.

The *Industrial Land Inventory in the Northern Transportation Corridor of British Colombia* (2007) report identified one industrial property of 11 acres to be vacant. In discussions with municipal staff, this property is owned by CN Rail and remains vacant. In addition, one commercial property of approximately 6 acres is vacant and serviced with water and sewer lines.

Commercial and industrial investment has been weak from 2006 to 2009, with the exception of 2008 when building investment was $693,000.

Village of Valemount

The Village of Valemount has 291 acres of commercial land. Valemount does not have any land designated for industrial uses. The majority (186 acres) of commercial land is designated for highway/tourist commercial uses. Sizable portions of the commercial land are also designated service commercial (46 acres), Main Street Planning Area (31 acres) and Central Business District (28 acres).

The community has received strong commercial investment of its size as indicated in the building permit activity from 2006 to 2009.

Summary of recommendations

- Adopt a business development guide for prospective investors/developers.

- Prepare an inventory of available industrial and commercial properties for sale in the Fraser Fort-George Robson Valley Canoe Electoral Area H, Village of McBride and Village of Valemount.
- Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion corporate calling program with existing businesses on the industrial and commercial lands to determine business expansion plans. Determine the implications for industrial/commercial land needs for these businesses.
- Support businesses considering expanding on industrial and commercial lands by walking them through planning and building development processes.

Figure 41: Approximate Area of Industrial and Commercial Land Use Designations

Land Use Designation	Approximate Area (acres)
Robson Valley-Canoe Electoral Area H	
Commercial Designations	
Local Commercial	78
Recreation Commercial	1,378
Highway Commercial	207
Sub-Total - Commercial	*1,663*
Industrial Designations	
Light Industrial	268
Heavy Industrial	856
Sub-Total - Industrial	*1,124*
Sub-Total - Robson Valley-Canoe Electoral Area H	**2,786**
Village of McBride	
Commercial Designations	
Highway Commercial	82
Local Commercial	1
Main Street Commercial	36
Sub-Total - Commercial	*119*
Industrial Designations	
Light Industry	27
Heavy Industry	33
Sub-Total - Industrial	*60*
Sub-Total - Village of McBride	**179**
Village of Valemount	
Central Business District	28
Main Street Planning Area	31
Highway/Tourist Commercial	186
Service Commercial	46
Sub-Total - Village of Valemount	**291**
Total	**3,256**

Source: Robson Valley-Canoe Downstream & Upstream Community Official Plans, Schedule B, Village of McBride Official Community Plan, Schedule B, Village of Valemount Official Community Plan, Schedule B.

Figure 42: Industrial and Commercial Property Investment

	Commercial		Industrial	
Year	No. of Permits	Construction Value	No. of Permits	Construction Value
Village of Valemount				
2006	5	$1,738,000		
2007	4	$791,000		
2008	5	$271,000		
2009	9	$105,000		
Village of McBride				
2006			1	$26,000
2007	5	$113,000		
2008	3	$693,000		
2009	3	$65,000		
Robson Valley-Canoe Electoral Area H				
2006	3	$254,400		
2007	3	$151,000	1	$125,000
2008	4	$617,000		
2009	2	$90,000	1	$500,000
Total				
2006	**8**	**$1,992,400**	**1**	**$26,000**
2007	**12**	**$1,055,000**	**1**	**$125,000**
2008	**12**	**$1,581,000**	**0**	**$0**
2009	**14**	**$260,000**	**1**	**$500,000**

Source: Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, Development Services Office, Village of Valemount, 2010.

6.4 Electricity and Broadband Services Action Plan

Electricity Services Action Plan

The BC Hydro service to the Valemount – McBride area has long been a cause of concern for local residents. The 138 kV British Columbia Transmission Corporation (BCTC) transmission line that serves a substation in the Valemount area runs over 300 km from Kamloops. Since this substation is fed only by this long radial feed line, it is subject to outages whenever the transmission line is damaged, as it cannot be fed from another available supply.

From the substation in Valemount, a single three phase 35 kV BC Hydro distribution line runs nearly 200 km up the Robson Valley to McBride and beyond as far as Ptarmigan Creek[17]. This line is subject to frequent power outages – the most frequent cause of which is trees falling across the line. BC Hydro statistics indicate the average customer in the McBride area has 7.15 outages per year, lasting an average of 2.25 hours, which is 3 times the provincial average. Forest fires in 2003 destroyed portions of the transmission line and left the Valley without power for several weeks. Anecdotal evidence suggests the outages are much more frequent, and many residents, especially in the outlying areas have purchased standby generators to help them ride through the outages.

The power outages however are not the only issue – the power quality is also problematic. Being at the end of a very long transmission line and then a long distribution line, the power quality is subject to dips and brownouts. A study conducted by the McBride and District Chamber of Commerce found that 100% of the businesses in the area reported damage to electronic equipment, including computers, fax machines, debit machines, freezers, coolers, etc. This damage also led to food spoilage, lost sales and lost revenue.

The Chamber of Commerce report estimates that the direct cost of the power reliability at hundreds of thousands of dollars per year – other indirect costs such as loss of business and loss of productivity added to this total.

The existing BC Hydro / BCTC power line not only has problems in getting reliable power into the Robson Valley, but it also causes problems for the IPPs that want to develop clean energy and get this energy out to markets in the south. The existing power line does not have the capacity required to transmit the energy from all of the IPPs that have developments currently planned for the Valley.

Following many years of discussions, a day-long meeting was held in McBride on May 21, 2010 that brought together the key players in the power reliability issue. This included the Chairman of the Board of BC Hydro, Dan Doyle, Transportation Minister MLA Shirley Bond, Mayors of McBride and Valemount, representatives of BC Hydro and BCTC and a selection of the IPPs with projects in the area.

At the meeting BC Hydro and BCTC heard the concerns from the IPPs, the Mayor of McBride and others. They then presented their plan for improving reliability of the power supply. The short term plans include:

- installation of a biodiesel generator at McBride that would provide sufficient energy to power the Village of McBride during power outages – they hope to have this is place by the fall of 2010

[17] From Ptarmigan Creek, a single phase Hydro line carries on along the logging roads and feeds Bend and Dome Creek, then runs up the dirt road to Highway 16 again and feeds the highway works yard and the provincial rest area. This is about 15 km past the end of the three phase line.

* improved vegetation management along the powerline will be performed to increase reliability

While these steps will improve the short term reliability, they do not address the long terms goals of increased reliability and capacity of the powerline. To address these items, a Task Force will be formed that includes BC Hydro Management, the Mayor of McBride and representatives from the local IPPs. They will look for ways to develop a new transmission line from Valemount to McBride, and a new substation near McBride and look at the long term solution, which is to extend a new transmission line from McBride to Prince George. This will allow the area to be loop fed from two sources. Initial estimates presented at the meeting put the cost of this long term solution at up to $200 million. The Task Force will look at ways to fund this construction with a possibility of some form cost sharing or cost recovery from the IPPs that will come on stream once the line is constructed.

Because it is tough to justify $200 million of 'provincial' money to help out a few thousand people in a remote part of British Columbia, the key here is the IPPs. If they can band together and present a large enough business case to the government, then the area might stand a chance for a new transmission line. The current provincial government is very "pro-business", so if the government can see an opportunity that makes sense financially and economically, they will be willing to spend money to go after it.

In addition, the IPPs can work on a model where they band together and pay part of the cost – perhaps through a levy on the money they receive for their power. The way it is now, with each one being independent, they are too small to fund it themselves. There is, or was, different pots of money available through the infrastructure programs and there is a precedent in that the Highway 37 corridor project was funded for its big power upgrade. However, it had several proposed large mines that needed the power.

Broadband Internet Action Plan

In the past, Robson-Canoe Valleys lacked a reliable broadband internet and cell phone coverage. Recent upgrades by Telus have helped, with cell phone coverage being extended to McBride and surrounding areas. Internet has also been improved, with Telus offering high speed broadband internet in McBride and Valemount, including Mt. Robson. The Telus services provides broadband speed of up to 8 MB/s near the Telus offices, with the speed decreasing as one moves further away from the offices. Service is limited to within 4-5 kilometres of the main Telus office.

Outlying areas between McBride and Valemount are serviced by the Robson Valley Internet Corporation, which offers wireless internet service from just south of Valemount to just north of McBride. They offer three packages, with speeds ranging from 1 to 2.25 MB/s. As this is a wireless service, the speed and reliability depend upon the location being served.

Telus engineering representatives have indicated that further improvements are technically possible in some outlying areas, including Tete Jaune and Dunster, however, there are no plans at this time develop these opportunities.

The challenge for enhancing the services is that it will be extremely difficult to get Telus to see the financial justification of spending money to bring high speed internet to the few people that live in these outlying communities. Without subsidy, the business model is just not practical.

A more realistic option for consumers who want high speed Internet where Telus signal is weak is satellite. There are a number of national service providers and over the last couple of years they have offered deep discounts on the required hardware. The positive side of satellite is that consumers do not have to install additional phone or cable lines which avoids a monthly fee. On the negative side, signal latency makes any application requiring real-time user input (e.g. games, voice over internet, videoconferencing) almost unusable.

7 Guiding Principles and Action Planning

7.1 Guiding Principles – Important Concepts for Action Planning

Guiding principles are aimed at providing the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George and its municipal partners with direction on establishing a strong and sustainable economy. They are intended to inform or shape decision-making and are statements of purpose that define how the community's should make decisions pertaining to their economy.

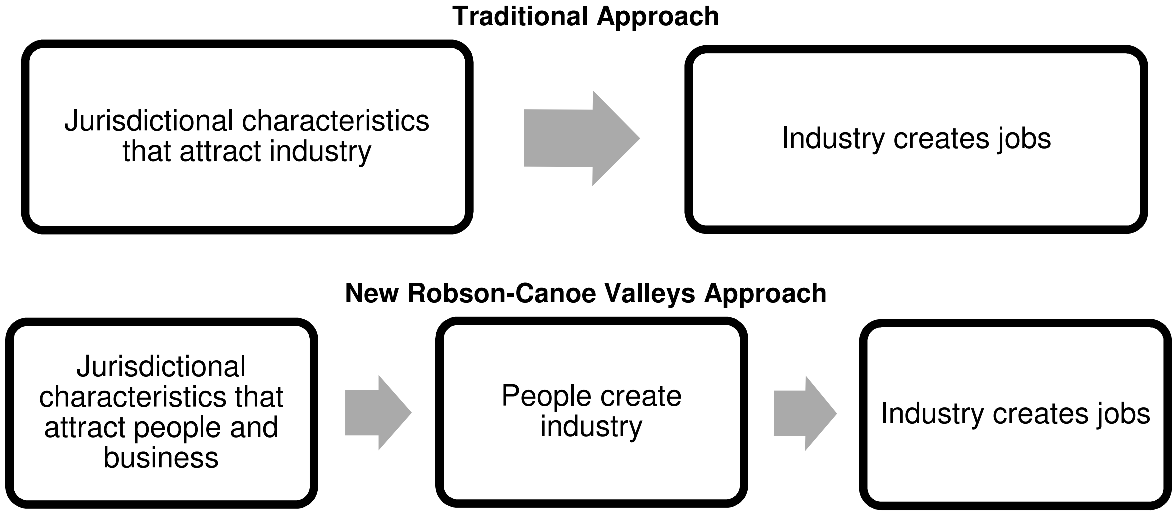
In general all policies should ensure:

- Reasonable taxes and fees for ratepayers
- A positive business environment
- Broadening employment opportunities within District borders
- Enhancement of the District's availability of labour, infrastructure and capital resources to support relocating and expanding businesses
- Positive and productive communication between the District's municipalities and the business community including non-governmental organizations
- Attraction and retention of clean, environmentally-friendly businesses to protect the District's natural resources and quality of life.

Attract People, Not Just Industry

Richard Florida, in his book, 'The Rise of the Creative Class', projects that the future is trending towards economies in the developed world that can be located *anywhere* in a global sense. *Where* businesses choose to locate is becoming less a function of the traditional economic drivers such as jurisdictional cost (taxes), the supply of serviced industrial land, a ready supply of unskilled or semi-skilled labour, proximity to markets and transportation and much more a function of where *people choose to live*, which is governed by factors such as educational facilities, arts and culture activities, recreational amenities, etc. In other words, industry will not come to communities so much because of the availability of the basics of doing business (which of course must be present but frankly do little these days to distinguish one community from another), and more for the quality of life factors that uniquely differentiate places. This is shown in the diagram below which compares the traditional approach with the new District of Fraser Fort George approach.

Figure 43: Approaches to Attract Economic Growth



The logic outlined above applies most especially to the knowledge-based industries (that rely in particular upon Florida's notion of the creative class). Companies wishing to employ the talents and skills of such creative people must provide an environment that meets these needs; the locale in which they are located can play an even more important role than the working conditions at the workplace.

Fully half of the wealth in Canada is in the hands of the 50+ age group, the so-called 'Baby Boomers'. Many of these are skilled and well-educated people who are seeking a different living format; some wish to retire early but many are looking for second careers, often very different that which created their wealth in the first place. Florida contends that the preferred environment for such people is more rural, but not in an isolated environment. Instead they are seeking a creative and vibrant milieu in a less structured frenetic format than exists in the major urban centres – a perfect opportunity for the District of Fraser Fort George.

Creative centres do not thrive solely because of traditional economic reasons such as access to raw materials, transportation routes and a general labour force. These centres thrive because *people want to live there.* The newer economies require creative people who, in turn, require a creative environment. In order to attract and retain these people, companies must be located within this creative milieu.

There's a Role for Lead Generation and Prospecting

"Selling" is an important part of any economic development professional's skill set. It should become an integral part of weekly activities. With target sectors selected, the District can become much more confident in being proactive to reach out to potential investors/visitors and "influencers".

Economic Sustainability is More Likely with Effective Retention and Expansion
Business retention and expansion is a method of improving the local business environment by allowing the municipalities to learn from its own business community:

- What barriers to growth need to be removed?
- What opportunities exist in the broader economy as well as per individual business?

The process involves a survey designed to identify the current economic climate in the area and to solicit input from local businesses. Such initiatives will improve success in investment attraction by establishing a better business environment and creating a broader base of ambassadors to draw upon for incoming company executives to meet with.

Improving Quality of Place is Increasingly Important
Urban and rural quality is increasingly important in attracting both the educated worker as well as business investment. The quality of the built environment and public spaces, the vibrancy of its commercial districts, the condition of the road network and transportation system, telecommunications infrastructure – all of these are necessary and fundamental to attracting a talented labour force and creating a desirable place to live.

While historically the residents and businesses of the District have appreciated the area for its superior quality of life, there is an opportunity to move to the next level, to make it an even better quality environment for residents and ensure its long term viability and sustainability. This will require more effort at enhancing the District's downtowns and other commercial areas. These are key assets to the community both from the perspective of driving new commerce in the District as well as contributing to quality of place and experience.

Partnerships and Outreach
The District must make a more concerted effort in pursing and advocating for strategic and collaborative economic development in the region. This effort is not limited to inter-governmental collaboration, but also includes an array of partners and stakeholders that can have a more direct and immediate impact on the future economic growth of the area. The District has a history of collaborations and partnerships with community groups and organizations in economic development as well as neighboring communities. In future, these relationships will become increasingly important as the District embraces the directions outlined in this strategy.

Creating Jobs for Residents
A priority for the initiatives contained within this report is to create jobs for local residents. As described, there is a high level of unemployment due to the downturn in the forestry sector and for the overall stabilization of the economy and housing market, it is important to retain as many residents as possible. The most effective way to do that is to create jobs for them.

There is a wide range of skill sets and capabilities amongst the former employees of the forestry industry. Although many of the most highly skilled workers have gone elsewhere to apply their trades, there is anecdotal evidence that they will return when employment prospects brighten in the area.

7.1.1 Action Plan: Improve Investment Fundamentals

There are a number of fundamentals that need to be addressed in order for Robson-Canoe Valleys to enhance its investment attraction and retention program. For the most part, these need to be taken care of in the first year. However, dealing with them does not have to happen (and should not happen) at the expense of all of outward marketing initiatives.

Figure 44: Initiatives – Improving Investment Fundamentals

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Annual Planning	**Plan investment retention and attraction activities.** Review budget for spending that is not associated with accomplishing the objectives of these sector plans or projects that directly support the attraction or retention of new investment. Reallocate appropriately. Similarly for human resources, to allow focusing of time on investment readiness, marketing and selling activities, there is little time for other initiatives unless other resources are found. This would include responsibilities such as committee meetings, etc.
	Continue to incorporate training into the annual action plan. Can be in-community training such as guest speakers or out-of-town. Most emphasis should be on training that provides staff and board members with best practices, but also spend some dollars on sales/marketing training. Memberships to Economic Developers Association of British Columbia, Economic Developers Association of Canada and International Economic Development Council to allow savings on training.
	Complete annual Action Plans that will focus human and financial resources for all initiatives during the upcoming year. The plans will make an objective assessment of the previous year's efforts, relating the outcomes to the targets that were set at the beginning of the year and how they fit with the directions identified in the Opportunities Plan.
Investment Readiness and Services Delivery	**Maintain a detailed source of community data** including skills inventory, a community profile and labour market statistics. Ongoing updates should be provided (minimum quarterly).
	Maintain local business directory with an emphasis on ensuring all small and home based businesses are included.
	Continue to respond to investment prospects that are generated either through proactive means or by prospect taking the initiative. Judgement of the opportunity needs to be identified after initial contact with the prospect or his/her agent. A decision is needed in each situation whether to continue to invest time and money in prospects based on a realistic assessment of likelihood of success.
	Create a new website dedicated to the sector priorities of the economic development strategy. Do not hold back on this item! Investigate for best practices and understand that this medium offers the most widely viewed perception about the community. This is your message to the world! Includes photography, videos, podcasts, etc. Messaging should be aligned with the City's brand, in accordance with the results of 180 Marketing's brand development process.
	Utilize social networking tools to enhance economic development promotional efforts. See appendix B for a look at social media opportunities.

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
	Develop a number of sector-specific promotion and information pieces. • Information on available property should be delivered online through the municipalities. • The Internet takes precedence over all other media, and the implementation of enhanced website features are a strong step. However, there is still a place for ready-to-print marketing material or short-run marketing material. **In particular, Lone Eagles will be impressed with a professional package that is tailored to their needs.** • Each sector will have its own material and message but the overall look should be consistent with the communities' overall branding efforts. • Develop the following printed materials: o A 1-page Opportunity profile for each priority industry o A cover sheet for bound packages or cover sheet for a binder that can be used for all printed deliveries, familiarization tour guides, etc.
	Achieve the Gold Standard of service delivery • All future promotional materials and tools must be available online and readily available either as the user is browsing alone or on the phone with the development officer. • Continue to provide immediate email responses with relevant attachments, including community profile, available properties, mapping and market analyses. • Encourage other departments to have land use planning information available electronically (e.g. as has been done with Zoning By-law).
	Contact information goes on EVERYTHING! An investment decision is one of the most significant that any business person will ever make. This type of transaction will not happen without considerable involvement of the development officer. Ensure that the development officer's contact details are very prominent on EVERYTHING that is published. Direct all prospects to a person, not to an "info" or "inquiries" mailbox – they will expect personal service and want to know they will get it before picking up the phone or sending the email.
Performance Measuring	**Develop a lead and contact tracking system**.

7.2 Undertake an Aggressive Public Relations Strategy

This is an initiative that the economic development office needs to consider in support of its investment attraction and retention efforts, **but it is one that the municipality, as a whole, should support.** Positive public relations goes beyond just the aim of business investment – it sends a positive message out about the community that supports residential attraction, people wanting to work and shop in Robson-Canoe Valleys, people wanting to visit Robson-Canoe Valleys, people feeling good about their community, senior levels of government feeling positive about supporting infrastructure and social services programs, etc.

Good public relations does not happen on its own. It takes a lot of skill, and consistent hard work, over a period of time. It is part art, part science and when practiced correctly the results can be very rewarding. In many corners it is believed that public relations – versus other marketing communication tools – delivers the most bang for the buck.

Paid advertising increases name recognition, but media relations increases credibility. When people hear or read a story about the excellence of an organization in a newspaper or see a story praising the community on television, they will be much more likely to have a favourable opinion of Robson-Canoe Valleys.

This enthusiasm also affects people who live and own businesses in the area. They will become stronger believers in their community and will pass this message on to their peers.

Because a public relations campaign increases credibility, it helps you attract those who want the best and favour value over low cost. When someone has already heard of Robson-Canoe Valleys and has a favorable impression of the area, it is easier to attract and hold their attention while you tell your story. If people believe that Robson-Canoe Valleys is the best, they will understand why it is worth paying your price.

Another positive is that it is an excellent way of stretches the marketing budget. Because the media does not charge for news coverage, the relative cost of a good program is a lot less than for paid media or a direct mail campaign.

Here are some specific tactics that can come from a strong public relations campaign. The case study of Ely, Minnesota which is highlighted in Appendix B has some great public relations attention-grabbers.

Figure 45: Public Relations for a Municipality

Tactic	What	Result
Announce-ments	Brief press releases regarding hiring of new executives, openings of new buildings, expanded community services, etc.	Typically result in one- to two-paragraph stories in publications, and keep your name in front of the target audience.
Major Announce-ments	Announcing significant new infrastructure projects, social and health services program growth, new business investments, etc.	These typically result in 500- to 800-word stories in print publications and often merit radio and television coverage – a press conference or press briefing may also be appropriate.
Feature Story Releases	Although a feature story must be newsworthy, in the broad sense of the word, it is also timeless.	Unlike a news story, a feature can have a point of view, an "angle", and is often longer than a hard news story on the same subject.

Tactic	What	Result
"Trend" Press Releases	These are usually the most valuable to the news media, and will help you establish a reputation as a source. For a municipality, this could mean offering opinions on new government policy, importance of striking partnerships, etc.	These are usually the most valuable to the news media, and will help Robson-Canoe Valleys establish a reputation as a source.
B-roll or Video News Releases	Background video tapes will help get your story on television.	These could be of the inside of businesses in the community when generic footage is required and Robson-Canoe Valleys gets highlighted.
Webcasts	Webcasts can be live events or archived and available on demand. They are a cost-effective, instantaneous method to communicate with media all over the world, in a compelling, interactive manner that meets journalists' needs.	Using Webcasts, you can extend the reach of your public relations efforts, reduce your budget for spokespeople, ensure your message is communicated consistently across all audiences, better fit into journalists' schedules, and provide more compelling supporting elements.
Media Training for Spokespersons	Spokespersons should be immediately available and trained in how to work with the media. The media usually wants to speak to an authority in the field, not the public relations person, for in-depth stories.	It is vital for persons who are often in the public eye on controversial topics.
"Op-ed" Articles	Typically run opposite the editorial page, are an excellent opportunity to comment on issues of the day and to build name recognition as an expert in the field.	They run under the by-lines of experts, and give you a chance to state your case in your own words, with minimal editing by a reporter. Once published, they can be effectively used as reprints.
Speech Writing	Remarks by an organization's top executives can attract positive attention.	Keynote addresses at conventions, luncheon talks to service or professional groups, greetings to guests at receptions and dinners are among the possible forums.
Photography	Although it may not seem obvious, photography is most important when a subject is difficult to photograph and/or not inherently visual.	It greatly increases the chance that the media will use your material.
Internet Monitoring	Social and community websites and forums like Wikipedia.org and TripAdvisor.com should be tracked continuously for the information that is posted about Robson-Canoe Valleys and its key people, community groups and businesses. In many cases, it is entirely appropriate for the municipality/band to add material.	These media are quickly overtaking all other media in terms of usage. Taking advantage of the opportunity to frame the message where possible and appropriate.
Newsletters and Annual Reports	Another way to keep your strategic messages in front of your target audience is to communicate via a quarterly newsletter and annual report.	This is an excellent place to recap the coverage you have received in the media. Not everyone in your target audience will have seen all the coverage your organization has received. When it is reviewed in its entirety the sum becomes greater than its parts.

A suggested budget for this initiative is $25-70,000 per year whether in-house or using contract services. This budget would increase as it is determined what the desired market to reach is, i.e. Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary. Target areas will be supported by current visitor research.

7.3 Lone Eagles and Active Retirees Action Plan

Figure 46: The Messaging for Lone Eagles and Active Retiree Sector

The Approach	Timetable for			
	Further Investigation	Partnership Development	Product Development	Promotion
We're pretty much ready to go out and get the investment! Just need to agree on this marketing direction and enhance our readiness to respond.	Those who can deliver the message of "strong community" along with "individualism" and "opportunity" must be brought into the initiative.	Public relations strategy will identify broadcast media partners. Small business groups must be contributing. Community's message must be well-coordinated.	Public profile needs to be energized. Additional measures like Communities in Bloom and investment in infrastructure will assist.	Currently, the main emphasis of the initiative. Distribution list of alumni, website and public relations are key.

The heaviest emphasis for the Lone Eagle sector is in the public relations and internet/website strategies.

Figure 47: Initiatives – Lone Eagles and Active Retiree Action Plan

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Investment Readiness	Conduct an annual survey of Lone Eagle establishments and entrepreneurs to understand the current context and needs of this flourishing sector of the economy. This can be completed effectively and reach a large audience by using mailed or online surveys. **Partnerships:** Chambers, Community Futures, Regional District
	Incorporate or update the needs and priorities of this sector into various municipal documents, including the integration into official plans and economic development strategic plans. Further to this point, engage Planning to bring creative sector and creative economy issues and policy considerations into land use and other areas of municipal planning. **Partnerships:** internal departments, Regional District
Investment Attraction	Undertake a marketing and branding strategy that includes a portfolio of local Lone Eagle success stories and testimonials to be used in a community profile and other promotional efforts. **Partnerships:** private sector, local community groups
	Continue to enhance the municipal website as the main investment attraction tool. Use examples from Prince Edward County's www.buildanewlife.ca as a baseline. **Partnerships:** private sector, local community groups
	The most likely future investors are those who have previous ties to the community. Consistently distribute information to this group and involve them in the community's existing and expanded social media campaigns. • Establish distribution lists of existing citizens and business owners, graduated high school students, people who once worked in the community (e.g. RCMP, hospital, school) • Dedicate significant resources to providing ongoing information to this target group through social/interactive media networking, email distribution, website postings, newspaper/radio/television appearances **Partnerships:** private sector, local community groups
	Work with media to promote success stories of young persons who have chosen to make their homes/careers in the area **Partnerships:** private sector

7.4 Tourism and Culture Action Plan

Figure 48: The Messaging for Tourism and Culture Sector

Sector	The Approach	Timetable for			
		Further Investigation	Partnership Development	Product Development	Promotion
Tourism	**Product development needs to continue but not at the expense of promotions – there is enough already to be excited about.**	Continuing to focus on initiatives that are at the heart of Lone Eagle-Existing Resident-Tourist Sweet Spot.	Promotion at a regional level needs to be supported when looking at international markets.	There is a need to focus on non-winter activities to round out the sector. Opportunities to round out the winter season also exist by making the destination more family-oriented.	Regional and local initiatives are important vehicles – all businesses must participate.

Figure 49: Initiatives – Tourism and Culture Action Plan

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Product Development Investment Readiness	Continued development of snowmobiling industry
	Development of motorized trail use in the summer months – this has to be done carefully as government regulations are very restrictive on the use of motorized vehicles in wilderness area – nonetheless it is a significant opportunity with many inquiries to VARDA and an opportunity to fill the summer tourism void
	Product development is needed in the Ancient Forest and the Walker Rainforest Wilderness Forest in the Crescent Spur area. They need assistance to have the area 'protected' and then for development an industry around the product that will support its protection from abuse
	Support the 5 year Cultural Plan to develop cultural and community programs and attractions to support tourism
	Agri-tourism opportunities in Dunster/McBride area
	Investigate the possibility of tourism opportunities from the hot springs in the Valemount area
	Maintain and enhance existing hiking trails to ensure maximum enjoyment and safety.

7.5 Forestry and Wood Products Action Plan

Figure 50: The Messaging for Forestry Sector

The Approach	Timetable for			
	Further Investigation	Partnership Development	Product Development	Promotion
The sector has been reeling for several years but some local operators are adjusting successfully to new economic realities. Progress must continue to be made one operator at a time with the addition of pursuing a new community wide value-added and bio-energy project.	Retention initiative will identify new business opportunities for existing companies. An overall strategy for success in the sector needs to be agreed to.	Partnerships between the communities are important as are relationships with existing business entities. Provincial and Federal legislators need to be onside for important changes that will have positive local impacts.	Debate is still circulating on the merits of various alternative energy ideas and other uses for residual wood and fibre that is addition to the Allowable Annual Cut. Clear business plans are required before moving ahead.	Investment attraction is somewhat preliminary as retention is the number one concern and business plans are required for newer technologies.

Figure 51: Initiatives – Forestry Marketing Action Plan

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Investment Readiness	There is an essential need for a regional "Forestry Success Strategy" in an effort to establish some consensus on the best ways to move forward. Currently efforts are very isolated.
Investment Retention	Establish a Forestry Industry Resources Centre that is fashioned after the Dunedin Research Support Fund described below. On the retention side the main goal is to expose existing manufacturers to alternative opportunities and how investments in technology can positively affect their business. The Centre will assist with accessing funding to write innovative business plans.
Investment Attraction	Capitalize on the provincial and federal governments' plans of economic stimulus through infrastructure projects. Identify long-required but neglected capital projects which can be quickly turned into short-term jobs for those with forestry skills (e.g. utility line clearing, tree planting, recreational trail development (walking, biking, four wheeling, snow machining, waterfront boardwalk maintenance, new road construction)
	Use the Forestry Resource Centre concept identified above as a mechanism to conduct feasibility studies and complete business plans for the many value added and residual wood ideas such as wood-to-energy facilities, pelletizing operations, etc. This role is currently being undertaken by the Wildlife Committee and is encouraged to continue.

Dunedin, New Zealand's Research Support Fund

For this community that is a research and development hub in New Zealand, it was becoming obvious that while the R&D being done in the city was world-class, the ability to communicate that effectively to grant funding organizations was poor. To improve its communication to funders and increase the chances of winning grants, the R&D industry identified the following needs: industry connections, visits to funding agencies, partnership opportunities, access to good grant bid writers, mentoring and financial analysis.

Taking approximately nine months to build by the city's Economic Development Unit (EDU), the programme releases researchers' valuable time, shares the financial risk, provides expertise to solve business problems, and fosters business excellence and innovation.

Since the programme became available for use in 2005, results are:

- Budget spent: $78,556
- Value of grant bids backed: $24,570,000
- Additional R&D dollars attracted to Dunedin: $17 million
- For every $1 million in grant bids applied for by the support fund, researchers actually obtain $690,000 to spend on R&D
- Greater collaboration and increased trust and confidence between EDU and R&D providers

Imagine the positive impact this type of grant writing or business planning service for forestry sector employers.

7.6 Senior Government Services Action Plan

Figure 52: The Messaging for the Senior Government Services Sector

The Approach	Timetable for			
	Further Investigation	Partnership Development	Product Development	Promotion
Focused on retention. Attraction aimed at health care services and opportunities that present themselves.	None required for retention because targets are clearly defined. Attraction targets are refined.	Relationships with local service leaders are critical to identifying opportunities and potential negative developments.	Retention strategy will identify any factors that need addressing. Success in new initiatives will depend on identifying a niche and putting a business case together.	Focused on one-to-one contact with key decision makers.

Figure 53: Initiatives – Senior Government Services Action Plan

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Retention and Expansion	There is heavy emphasis on this initiative for the Government Services sector. **Complete visits with all local senior government services.** A two headed approach is required – economic development staff speaking at the staff level and political representatives (e.g. Mayor, Council) speaking at a political level.
Investment Attraction	The heaviest push should be on identifying opportunities for health services such as additional hospital care and long term care for the aged as mentioned within the main text. Campaigns that emphasize face-to-face meetings with government staff (by local staff) and MPs and MLAs (by local politicians) need to be developed. A common front with all parts of the community working together on the initiative is essential.
	Concentrate resources on **identifying opportunities in the non-government organization sector** such as social and health organizations that need space for regional offices. Tap into the community's network of people participating in Boards of Directors. These are excellent sources of knowledge and administrative jobs which helps with Lone Eagle spousal employment.

7.7 Agriculture Action Plan

Figure 54: Initiatives – Agriculture Action Plan

Strategic Category	Recommended Initiative
Product Development	Organize a 'trade team' to visit communities that have developed value added agriculture economies. Include local food processors, farmers and CFDC. Arrange a follow up where product developers visit the region to work with local people to develop new products.
	Expand local production and access to local food through the development of farm gate sales, farmers markets and a more robust food distribution network.
	Liaise with local institutions such as schools, municipal offices and hospitals to local farmers and buy local products for their facilities.
	Evaluate the municipal by-laws and food support programs and make adjustments to grow home-based and farm-based small business in this sector.
Workforce Development	Build a cooperative program with local schools to grow interest in youth in the areas of food production, processing, marketing/retailing and distribution.
	Enhance and encourage local trades training programs in culinary arts and artisan cheese and meat preparation.
Government Processes	Advocate to provincial and federal regulators the inflexible regulations that threaten small value added agricultural operations
Investment Attraction / Development	Assemble a value added agriculture sub-committee. Identify source funds for agri-food investment.
Marketing & Promotions	Continue to develop marketing campaigns that put the region on the food map. Include websites, in store displays in targeted markets, local advertising in targeted markets, etc.
	Promote the agriculture and agri-food success stories that make the region resilient to changes in the sector.

7.8 Working Together: Cooperation amongst Communities in Robson-Canoe Valleys

The communities of Robson-Canoe Valleys have indicated an interest in working together towards common goals. The following is a list of high quality options where a partnership makes success more possible because of the increased human and financial resources, the increased ability to apply for senior government or other sources of funding or the combination of the two communities brings economies of scale for assets needed to be successful.

1. Tourism – While the two areas are somewhat different when it comes to the product they offer there are some areas that they can jointly promote in order to get people moving from one area to the other. These areas could include trails, heli-skiing, snowmobiling and other activities such as hunting and fishing.
2. Infrastructure – Cooperation is possible on working with government on infrastructure issues including telecommunications, hydro, highways, broadband, etc. A Regional Infrastructure Needs and Benefits Study could be conducted for the region that would look at the quality of the infrastructure and its viability for the next 20 years. This study could examine land available for residential/commercial development, emergency services, water treatment facilities, transportation linkages, etc.
3. Business – There is a need for business support programs and skill development education in all areas of FFG. Community Futures is another obvious partner.
4. Forestry – There is commonality with the Community Forests as well as opportunities in the areas of bio-energy and value added. If one community is producing woodchips, then another may partner in producing bio-oil. The bio-oil company could then produce resin that could be used to build composites.
5. Forestry – Leaders from each community should form a joint committee to meet with the British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range to discuss opportunities in the forestry sector.
6. Seniors Services – Since government is not going to support duplication of services, they would be wise to develop a rotational program for specialists and support for diagnostic services in McBride at the hospital. Home care services and extended care facilities are needed in both towns.
7. Land Development – To cooperate on style and features of the development of industrial park land to compliment the marketing efforts for business growth throughout the region.
8. Government Services – There are opportunities to support each other, rather than compete, for regional services and educational program delivery.
9. Agriculture – They could all lobby for less restrictive regulations regarding farm gating and farmers markets – also the abattoir issue. Continue to collaborate in hosting farmers markets showcasing the agricultural products of the region.
10. Lone Eagle Marketing – This is a significant area of potential cooperate as both communities are desperately in need of increased population and more permanent residents. They can equally promote their quality of life, cultural assets and of course the recreational/nature amenities that are available in all areas. This could include the production of a promotional video or donation of helicopter time (sponsored by communities or businesses or donated by a local helicopter company). Local leaders could be a part of showing the videographer the 'sweet spots' in the communities. Website development is an important component to this promotion as well. Ensure that there is a dedicated person who is responsible for updates and improvements.
11. Economic Gardening (Business Retention and Expansion) – Develop a program in partnership with Fraser-Fort George Community Futures, New Caledonia College, UNBC and other organizations to

complete Economic Gardening projects on an annual basis. There may be individuals in the community who have a vision, but are not sure how to make it a reality. This initiative could allow 1-2 people to be hired to spend time in all communities and meeting with existing businesses.

12. Skills Development – Work with local colleges to hold a computer literacy course for residents of the area. This would allow for people to learn the basic skills of a computer, and in turn would increase the business success in the region.

Appendix A – List of Individuals Consulted

Focus Group Participants

Name	Organization	Representing
Peter Felmark	Valemount Hotel	Tourism – Valemount
Wendy Dyson	College of New Caledonia and Valemount/Mt. Robson Visitor Centres	Tourism – Valemount
Arnold Wied	VARDA, Valemount Pines Golf Club	Tourism – Valemount
Hugo Mulyk	BC Parks	Tourism – Valemount
Curtis Pawliuk	VARDA – Valemount Area Recreation Development Association	Tourism – Valemount
Wayne Van Velzen	BC Parks	Tourism – Valemount
Dee McEachern	Robson Valley Shared Ministry	Tourism – Valemount
Bill Kruisselbrink	CFDC of FFG	Tourism – Valemount
Albert Morin	King Creek Golf	Tourism – McBride
Jill Williams	Beaverview RV Park	Tourism – McBride
Dannielle Alan	McBride Visitor Centre and Whistle Stop Gallery	Tourism – McBride
Clara Appleby	Chamber of Commerce and mutual fund representative of Scotia Bank	Business – McBride
Raj Basran	Stedmans Department Store	Business – McBride
Verna Campbell	Retired Manager of seniors lodge	Seniors – McBride
Thelma Molendyk	Retired school bus driver	Seniors – McBride
Glenda Thompson	Village of McBride, 'Measuring up the North'	Seniors – McBride
Dawna Hickerty	Retired Secretary of OAPO #118	Seniors – McBride
Amy Bartlett	Executive Director, Robson Valley Support Society	Seniors – McBride

Interviews

Name	Affiliation	Location
Bill Kruisselbrink	Alternate Regional Director, Area H	Valemount
Bobbie Roe	Councillor	Valemount
Clara Appleby	Scotia Bank	McBride
Gary Foreman	Yellowhead Helicopters	Valemount
Greg Halseth	UNBC	Prince George
Hollie Blanchette	Concerned Citizens Group	Valemount
Irene Rejman	Councillor	McBride
Rita Tchir	Councillor	Valemount
Katherine Scouten	VP, Initiatives Prince George	Prince George
Christine Latimer	GM of Best Western, Chamber of Commerce	Valemount
Marc von der Gonna	McBride Community Forest Corp.	McBride
Mike Frazier	Mayor	McBride
Ken Starchuck	Regional Director	Prince George
Joan Nordli	Former Councillor	Valemount
Wendy Dyson	Adventure Management	Valemount
Bob Smith	Mayor	Valemount
Cynthia Pike	Councillor	Valemount
Lorrane Martin	Councillor	McBride
Tom Dall	CAO	Valemount
Eliana Clements	CAO	McBride
Gord Simmons	RDFFG, former employee	
Donnie MacLean	Entrepreneur	Valemount
John McGuire	Entrepreneur	Valemount
Jeanette Townsend	Former Mayor	Valemount
Bruce Wilkinson	Teacher, NORE Program	Valemount
Peter Amyoony	President of Dunster Community Association	Dunster
Byron Bustin	President of Tete Jaune Community Association	Tete Jaune
Roger Beck	Retired professor, U of A, recreational gardener	Tete Jaune
Julie and Rick Zammuto (plus delegation)	Crescent Spur Community Association	Crescent Spur
Silvio Gislimberti	Economic Development Officer	Valemount
Margaret Graine	Economic Development Officer	McBride
Mark Aubrey	Crescent Spur Heli-skiing	Crescent Spur

Appendix B – Social Media and Advanced Web Social Media Strategy in Economic Development

Social media has forever changed the way that people communicate, and has become a very popular method of reaching out to the public for economic development and tourism agencies. Social media is an internet and web-based technology that changes broadcast media monologues (one too many) into social media dialogues (many to many). People are now able to produce content on the internet, instead of just accessing content. It is believed by many that due to the increase in social media popularity, this period in time will become known as the 'Attention Age'.[18] This report will explore what social media is and its common uses, examine social media best practices, and display examples of communities who are effectively using these practices.

What is Social Media?

The popularity of social media has been soaring, so much that Facebook alone has exceeded the use of 'Google'. But with all this hype about social media, one must wonder if it is a fad, or if it is here to stay?

Economic development and tourism organizations may find themselves putting in countless hours on social media sites, with a fear that in coming days, months or years, it will be a thing of the past, as users go on to the newest trend. However, given the current popularity in social media, statistics indicate that it will not be going anywhere. While the platform being used may become obsolete or be replaced, social media as a whole will continue to play a major role in advancing economic development and tourism opportunities. According to Econsultancy.com[19], social media is here to stay. Here are some points that support this argument:

- Social networks and blogs are the 4th most popular online activities, exceeding personal email. 67% of global users visit member communities and 10% of all time spent on the internet is on social media sites.
- If Facebook were a country, it would be the fourth most populated place in the world. This means it easily beats the likes of Brazil, Russia and Japan in terms of size.
- 80% of companies use (or are planning to use) LinkedIn as their primary tool to find employees during the course of this year. The site has just celebrated reaching its 45-millionth membership.
- It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million listeners. Terrestrial TV took 13 years to reach 50 million users. The internet took four years to reach 50 million people. In less than nine months, Facebook added 100 million users.
- Wikipedia currently has more than 13 million articles in more than 260 different languages. The site attracts over 60 million unique users a month and it is often hotly debated that the information it contains is more reliable than any printed encyclopaedia.
- It's been suggested that YouTube is likely to serve over 75 billion video streams to around 375 million unique visitors during this year.
- According to Socialnomics[20], if you were paid $1 for every time an article was posted on Wikipedia, you would earn $156.23 per hour.
- Since April this year, Twitter has been receiving around 20 million unique visitors to the site each month, according to some analytical sources.

Lessons learned in platforms that exist today will be relevant for those that are invented tomorrow.

[18] Schefren, R. (2007). *The attention age doctrine, part 2.* www.prweb.com/releases/online_marketing/entrepreneurs/prweb573273.htm

[19] Econsultancy.com (2009). 20 *+ More Mind Blowing Social Media Statistics.* econsultancy.com/blog/4402-20+-more-mind-blowing-social-media-statistics

[20] Socialnomics (2010). *Facebook Surpasses Google.* www.socialnomics.com

The table below characterizes social media users and the types of social media practices they would be a part of. As is shown below, with each type of social media user comes a more interactive method of communicating, such as the moving from the role of a spectator - someone who is mainly reading/watching material, to moving into the role of the creator-someone who is actively contributing content to the world of social media, as well as reading, watching, and commenting on existing material.

Characteristics of Social Media Users

Social Media Type	Characterization	Example Behaviours
Spectators	**Consume social content** including blogs, user generated video, podcasts, forums, or reviews.	Read blogs, watch videos from other users, listen to podcasts, read online forums, read customer ratings/reviews.
Joiners	**Connect in social networks** like MySpace and Facebook	Maintain profile on a social networking site, visit social networking sites.
Collectors	**Organize content** for themselves or others using RSS feeds, tags, and voting sites like Digg.com.	Use RSS feeds, add 'tags' to web pages or photos, "vote" for web sites online.
Critics	**Respond to content** from others. They post reviews, comment on blogs, participate in forums, and edit wiki articles.	Post ratings/reviews of products/services, comment on someone else's blog, contribute to online forums, contribute to/edit articles in a wiki.
Creators	**Make social content go.** They write blogs or upload video, music, or text.	Publish a blog, publish own web page, upload video personally created, upload music personally created, write articles or stories and post them.
Nesters	**Start, and build online social communities.**	Develop social media programs and actively promote them.

Adapted from: Forrester Research Inc. (2008). www.slideshare.net/jbernoff/social-technographics-explained

These tools allow economic development and tourism organizations an opportunity to reach out to their community base through the internet. They are able to interact with new groups of people (e.g. tourists who are currently visiting the community) as well as rebuild relationships with groups they may have lost touch with (e.g. former residents who have moved away from the community). Social media has become a very popular tool for effective marketing and sales, as many of the platforms that it operates on are available across the globe, in many different languages.

Social media tools are endless. Appendix 1 displays a chart of the most common social media tools that are being used today-there are over 200 listed! Economic development and tourism agencies may find it difficult to determine which social media tools are most practical for them. The following section will discuss a few tools that are able to help economic development and tourism organizations manage their social media practices more effectively[21][22].

Popular Social Media Tools

Twitter is a communication platform that helps businesses and individuals stay connected. Economic development organization can create short news updates that broadcast to anyone who has registered their site as a 'follower'. It has become very popular in economic development, as it basically offers live 24-7 updates to groups of people who have similar interests. Updates can be used for upcoming events, where to register for training, who to contact regarding economic develop, and much more.

Is another social networking giant that acts as a powerful tool for communities and individuals looking to build relationships, raise visibility for the community and target a customer niche. It allows you to connect directly to the potential customers or clients who might want to know about you in a relatively low-cost advertising platform. Many municipalities have integrated this tool into their social media plan as it helps them to offer 2-way communication with users, and is a powerful tool to disseminate information. An innovation of the service is to sign up visitors when they arrive at a local tourist information office which will make them eligible for 'instant offers' that tourism partners provide (e.g. "first one to show up at Sandra's Ice Cream Parlour with a Canadian flag receives a free sundae", "Jim's Fishing Charter is leaving in 30 minutes and has four spots left – hurry to get 30% off", "two rooms still available at Holiday B&B"). This type of interaction with visitors was never available before and will make the community a more interesting and fun place to visit.

While most people know the common video viewing application of You Tube, many have not considered how it could help their organization/community to grow by creating a viral video strategy in their marketing strategy. This can help to attract new interest, build community culture, turn inquiries into sales and help the community solidify their brand.

This service monitors Twitter mentions in real-time in a multi-column interface. The user simply has to input a search term into a column, add or remove columns as desired, and get an automatically-refreshing picture of what people are saying about the organization's brand or competing brands on the world wide web. This tool could help economic development professional gauge the public interest in specific social media programs they have undertaken.

[21] Piersall, W. (2010). *An introduction to social media strategy and socially driven content.* www.sparkplugging.com/sparkplug-ceo/an-introduction-to-social-media-strategy-and-socially-driven-content

[22] Mashable.com (2010). The Social Media Guide. mashable.com/2009/10/26/socia-media-entrepreneurs

Linked in® This program is very useful in economic development as it allows users to connect with past and present colleagues, discover connections when looking for a new development opportunity, or consult your network with questions or share advice.

uservoice UserVoice helps small businesses to juggle their social media. It can create bug reports to feature requests, and help track and manage the feedback of your users and customers. It helps to assure your user base that you care about what they have to say and allows the organization the benefit of receiving suggestions from people who are actually using the tool or service. Users are able to vote on the ideas of other users, which allows the organization a chance to understand the most-requested features and fixes for the application or service.

MailChimp® MailChimp is a mailing list manager and offers list management, tracking, analysis and custom HTML templates for up to 500 subscribers and 3,000 emails a month for free. This program allows you to integrate service with your own existing applications, tools, content management system or CRM solution. The program can be useful in helping economic development organizations keep track of their many contacts, while saving time.

Google earth Google Earth is an online program which allows users to view satellite images, maps, terrain, 3D buildings from anywhere on earth. Users are able to see seemingly endless amounts of geographical content, save toured places and share information with others. Features of Google Earth include: historical imagery from around the globe (i.e. see how areas have changed over time due to recent trends like suburban sprawl or global warming); ocean floor and surface date from marine experts; and simplified touring with audio and voice recording. Google also has a unique mapping feature which will allow communities or business owners to put their business on the map, literally. Business owners are able to customize how their business is able to track follow their customer/prospect trends, to see who is searching their business, where they are located and what in particular they are looking for.

RSS Feeds (most commonly expanded as "Really Simple Syndication") is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as blog entries, news headlines, audio and video – in a standardized format. An RSS document (which is called a "feed", "web feed" or "channel") includes full or summarized text, plus metadata such as publishing dates and authorship. Web feeds benefit publishers by letting them group content automatically. They benefit economic development organizations that want to subscribe to timely updates from favoured websites or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place. RSS feeds can be read using software called an "RSS reader", "feed reader", or "aggregator", which can be web-based, desktop-based, or mobile-device-based.

Social Media Best Practices

No matter how many social medial tools an economic development/tourism organization decides to use, the most important factor is determining how they will play into the overall strategy. If these tools are not organized and utilized effectively, the results could be disadvantageous to the organization. According to Josh Gordon (Social Media Today, 2009)[23], this means a big change for communities because it changes how a community's product and services are sold. Below are some best practices in economic development websites as recommended by YFactor, a leading economic development website developer[24].

1. Ease of Use

Visitors to a community's webpage should find it easy to use and find the information that they are looking for. Research has shown that if a user has to click too many times to find the information they are looking for, they will give up and try a new webpage. This means that website designers must find the best method possible to maximize the visitor experience while locating information in a space that requires less than five mouse clicks.

2. Content Completeness

The community's webpage must offer access to information and data that would be needed by an investor looking to locate their business in the municipality. Any information that would be relevant to an investor such as primary industry sectors, workforce availability, cost of doing business, proximity to highways and border crossings, etc. should be readily available on the economic developer's site.

3. First Impression

A website can serve as the first impression of an organization and the community. Therefore, it is very important that the first impression is a very positive one. If it is not a compelling enough message it is very possible that the site selector, potential investor or potential visitor will be quickly moving on to evaluate another municipality. The site must be done professionally, using maps, pictures and graphical images that are high quality and visually appealing.

4. Measure Results

A strong community website should have strong performance objectives. A plan should be made to track the number of site visitors and behaviour patterns as compared to the pre-established goals or key performance indicators. A set of benchmarks should be established and a comparison between other community websites should be made to ensure they measure up.

5. Two-Way Communication

It must be remembered that a modern economic development website is not simply an electronic brochure. Incorporation of interactive features such as blogs, cost calculators, land and space databases, polls and surveys all encourage visitor participation. Interactive maps are more engaging because they allow the user to navigate around the map and zooming in allows more detailed information to be displayed. These two-way communication tools should be given at least as high a priority as the textual presentation of facts and data.

Case Studies: Communities on the Right Track

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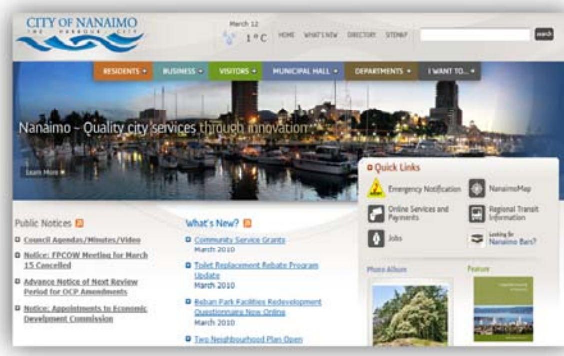
[23] Gordon, Josh (2009). *The Coming Change in Social Media Business Applications, Separating the Biz from the Buzz, Social Media Today*.

[24] YFactor (2010). *Economic development website best practices.* www.yfactor.com/Public/Default.aspx?l=705&n=Website+Best+Practices

In identifying community websites that were on the right track in terms of social media practices, the following list was used as general guideline for what a good case study should include.

- Home page including link for site selection section
- Contact person name for site selection inquiry
- Blogs
- Linked to Facebook
- Linked to Twitter
- Linked to LinkedIn
- Linked to other sharing platforms (i.e. YouTube, Flickr, Digg, StumbleUpon)
- Podcasts (Audio or Video)
- RSS Feeds
- Newsletters
- News Alerts
- Forums
- Multi-language functionality

Nanaimo, British Columbia



The City of Nanaimo's key marketing message is that it is "One of the most desirable, liveable small cities in North America". This phrase is evident throughout all of their promotional tools, including their website. The City of Nanaimo is the second largest urban centre on Vancouver Island and seems to have developed social media strategy that is quite effective.

The City of Nanaimo website[25] (www.nanaimo.ca) integrates several key features that help stimulate better participation in government. Simple features that help make the process less bureaucratic and time consuming include RSS feeds for public hearing notices and the ability to switch the website to a format designed for mobile devices. There is a lot of content available, but it is designed in a way that is neatly organized, such as by using a 'Quick Links' tab on the home page to access emergency notification, online payments and regional transit information.

Alongside this, the website makes use of other social media tools, such as the very popular Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, StumbleUpon, and many others using an 'Add This' toolbar. Upon entering their Facebook page, for example, it becomes apparent that a high number of people are 'fans' of the page.

The City of Nanaimo also has a very active Twitter account. They frequently use Twitter as a way to get messages out to their community, such as giving the user a registration code to view their new online activity guide. many of their posts (also called 'Tweets') are centered around brief but frequent reminders about important dates and upcoming events. Utilizing this program is very beneficial for the City of Nanaimo, as it cuts down on the cost of mail-outs, print/radio advertising, and can be done in seconds.

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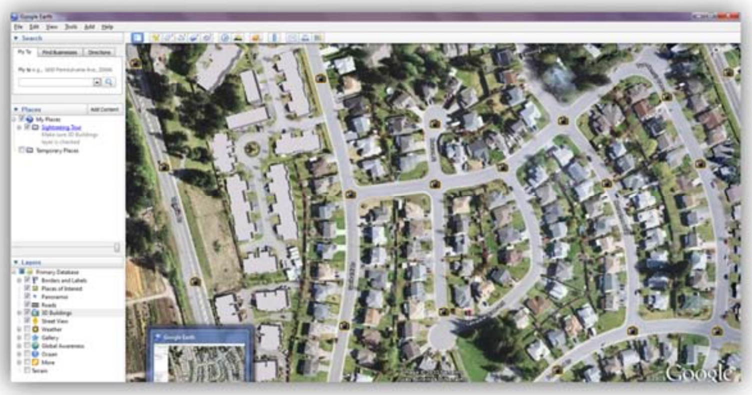
[25] City of Nanaimo (2010). www.nanaimo.ca.

This tool allows Nanaimo a cost savings in their marketing budget, and allows for more funding to be spent on other initiatives.

The Nanaimo presence on Google Earth (see below) includes maps, information on city parks, 3D visualization of the buildings, parcel information, and complete business listings. The site even allows the user to track real-time fire department incident reports. Google Earth includes very similar features as Google maps, but what is interesting about Google Earth is that the user is also able to view the sunlight across the landscape throughout different times of the day, as well as switch between views from Earth, the sky, and other planets. Nanaimo has taken their mapping one step further and has included a feature that will allow the user to discover a current listing of Nanaimo Businesses, grouped by NAICS Codes, therefore making businesses more easily accessible to potential residents, tourists, and investors.

City of Nanaimo on Google Earth



Prince Edward County

Prince Edward County (PEC) is an “island” located in Lake Ontario 1.5 hours east of the Greater Toronto Area and has a population of just over 25,000 people. Their website has emerged as a leader in creativity as it allows for the user to become engaged as soon as they visit the site due to the high quality images and relevant information. As seen below, the website (www.buildanewlife.ca) is very well organized and does not appear cluttered or overrun with information. Users are able to easily find what they are looking for, as they can 'click' to view information from different industry sectors.

Prince Edward County Webpage

A number of social media tools are available on this site, creating a very strong, interactive, two-way form of communication. Users are able to join PEC on Facebook, Spurr, Yahoo, Delicious, and Digg. They are also able to sign up to receive RSS Feeds, or share the website with a friend. To access these social media forms, the user visits the "Collaboration Centre" of the website, which is described as an online place where researchers, developers and community members from anywhere in the world can meet to exchange ideas about creative rural economies.

Another task that PEC has done very well has been incorporating videos to their website. In the "Collaboration" section of their website there is a link to You Tube. Upon clicking this link, a customized PEC You Tube page appears. This allows users to view/upload videos about PEC, view subscription information, list favourites, and create playlists. What is important to note is that it is only PEC material.

PEC[26] believes that through social networking & media and real human interaction they can strengthen skills training and their labour force for emerging economic opportunities in the community. Through research and academic work, they are able to identify new emerging rural economic opportunities and assist their businesses to capitalize on them. Ultimately, they are creating a space first "virtually" but very real and perhaps one day via "bricks and mortar" to build knowledge, develop skills, engage the community, enhance their labour force and assist their businesses to grow.

[26] Prince Edward County (2010). www.buildanewlife.ca

Ely, Minnesota

Ely is a small community with a population of 3,427 people located in northern Minnesota who once relied on the iron mining industry for its survival but had to reinvent itself when the deposits were all but removed. The town is an excellent example of a community that has capitalized upon tourism and entrepreneurism in order to hold and grow its population and establish tremendous local pride in the place. Ely has long been known as a place that harbours people of independent thinking and spirit. It's often called the "town at the end of the road," sitting as it does on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

While their community website does not seem to standout amongst the rest, it is their unique marketing strategy that will be outlined in this case study.

In 2009, Ely kicked off their campaign to host the 2016 Summer Games (see www.ely2016.com). This unique marketing ploy was not so much a bid for the games, but an opportunity to capitalize on the interest that was being generated in the Midwest because the region's largest city, Chicago, had put in a serious bid for the Games. One Minnesota online newspaper reported: "ELY, Minn. — This year's April Fool's hoax from the small northern Minnesota town of Ely is a bid to host the 2016 summer Olympics, including a plan to drain a lake for an in-ground stadium". The announcement was made on April Fool's Day, and followed up many other previous hoaxes such as a campaign that Canada was trying to buy Ely and move it north.

Knowing their target market for visitors and investors is the main population centres of the Midwest such as Minneapolis-St. Paul, Ely launched a series of radio spots on the Olympics bid on the Twin City's stations, and included social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. A website was created specifically for the 'Ely 2016' campaign, and users were able to access news reports, videos, links and give their support. The campaign featured a series of 'press conferences' that are available on their website, as well as on YouTube, which yielded more than 30,000 views.

Figure 56: Ely Twitter Posting

Figure 55: Ely Website

Source:www.ely2016.com

These quirky, yet effective campaigns have been very successful for Ely, as they have been the recipient of two Minnesota State Tourism awards, and the media coverage has continued. Ely attracted significant interest in new media outlets, including over 24,000 views on YouTube, more than 4,000 fans on Facebook and 500 followers on Twitter. This example shows that social media can be a very effective tool in helping small communities become known to potential investors and tourists.

So What Does it All Mean?

The case studies discussed above are prime examples of communities that have really developed their social media strategy and the value of it is very obvious to the user. These sites make use of social media tools on an everyday basis. Social media is not just a fad, or 'new toy to use', it has become a way of life, and an important tool in promoting the economic/tourism development potential for a community/region. An economic development/tourism organization should consider how they want to use social media, and the time/resources they have to dedicate towards it. From there, they should explore popular tools, and determine which ones are the most useful for them. Best practices exist, and an organization should consider these and carefully craft a social media strategy that fits their goals and overall strategy best. Not only will the organization receive greater recognition, but users of their social media will be increasingly intrigued and possibly compelled to visit that community either as a new resident, tourist, or business owner. The rewards are endless, and being relatively inexpensive, one might argue they have nothing to lose by giving social medial a chance.