



Chamber of Commerce AGM Presidents Message

The Nelson and District and Chamber of Commerce held our Annual General meeting March 26th at the New Grand Hotel. The AGM was a great event with a tremendous cross section of the business community attending. Thanks to all who took the time out of their busy work schedules to drop by and take part in the networking and socializing as well the business component of the AGM. The following is a summary of the Presidents message to the AGM as presented by 1st Vice President Cal Renwick.

“Thank you all for attending the Annual General meeting of the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the other members of our board of directors.

Brent Irving Secretary Treasurer, who we will call upon in a few minutes to deliver the financial report. Other directors include; Barry Auliffe, Chuck Bennett, Elliot Carter, Harry Davidson, Melanie Gettel, Brent Holowaychuck, Chris Jury, Bruce Lacroix, Travis Mann, Barry Mcwha, and Karen van Vogt and John Yowek.

My thanks to all members of the board for their commitment to the Chamber.

What does a Chamber of Commerce really do? Well to tell you the truth, issues that affect our members are of primary concern. The principal objective of the Chamber of Commerce is the promotion of economic activity to the benefit of all residents and businesses in the Nelson area. We were proactive in developing a shop local multi media marketing campaign during the important pre Christmas retail season, when our rising

Canadian dollar became a cause for concern for the local retail market. Our hope is to expand on that campaign throughout the year.

The Chamber of Commerce is actively involved in the Nelson Economic Development Partnership, Invest Kootenay, and the Nelson Area Tourism Partnership. The Chamber is also closely involved in the West Kootenay Boundary Regional Skills Advisory Council, keeping a close watch on the tight labour market and working with government, business and service providers towards long term solutions. All of these initiatives play a key role in our economic well being.

Through our work with the Nelson Economic Development Partnership we strive to encourage expanded and diversified small business and tourism sectors.

We are also supportive of development which recognizes the heritage and environmental values of our community.

As well, the Chamber wants to continue to build on the strengths of the many artistic, cultural and educational activities in our community

The Chamber, in conjunction with the BC and the Canadian Chambers of Commerce lobby local, provincial and federal governments on issue concerning business. The NDCC in collaboration with other District 8 Chamber delegates will be submitting a policy resolution to our upcoming BC Chamber AGM stressing the need to expand a provincial transportation plan that would support cost effective and accessible transportation to businesses and communities in rural BC.

So really the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce is a catalyst, a vehicle through which business and professional people work together for the common good of the community as a whole. So who does all of this? The chamber staff, the volunteers and of course the members.

The members provide the goals, and the funds through membership fees and by supporting our various fund raising activities such as the Chamber Gala dinner and auction each Fall. Obviously the Chamber can be many things to many people, but our strength is really our membership.

The Chamber membership hit an all time in 2007, pushing close to the 500 member level. In order for us to grow we realized the importance of getting feedback from our membership and elsewhere in the business community.

We conducted a membership survey last year. We felt in order to get better it was important that we find out exactly what we are doing right and of course areas where we could improve. It was apparent that most people felt the Chamber was doing a good job and meeting their needs.

So with that in mind, we will be striving to implement regular monthly **Business After Five** networking and social events. These will be moved around Nelson to various sponsoring businesses. It allows for the host business to spotlight their business and to act as the host of the evening. The Chamber of Commerce will use our membership to help get the word out and also to act as the co host of the event. We have also co presented luncheon meetings with the Nelson Rotary club by bringing in guest speakers. We

hope to build on that initiative throughout the year as speaking opportunities present themselves.

A question we are often asked is what is the status of the acquisition of the CP Rail station at the foot of Baker Street? The Chamber's vision for the station is quite simple: we intend on restoring the exterior of the building to its original state, while rehabilitating the interior in order to relocate the Chamber, Visitor Centre, and Economic Development Partnership operations into the building. We also envision a Regional Interpretive Centre as part of the building.

The Chamber recently commissioned Fairbank Architecture to develop some working drawings and to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study. We are also working in conjunction with Stephanie Fischer who was instrumental in the Touchstones restoration project. Plans indicate approximately 6500 square feet of space committed with the remaining 6500 square feet still to be allocated. We have met with numerous interested businesses and community organizations to discuss possible uses for the remaining portion of the building. We have also been applying for federal, provincial and regional grant opportunities. There should be little doubt that once the building is restored it will serve our community exceedingly well in providing the store front for the aforementioned operations. It is imperative that once the feasibility study of the building has been completed, that the business plan being developed for the remaining 6500 square feet ensures sound business practices, and that the project becomes self sustaining. In short, this project will once again see the CPR station playing an important role in Nelson.

Once the restoration is complete, we will continue to actively pursue the opportunity for Kootenay Rail Tours to operate day trips out of Nelson.

I would also like to further acknowledge the Nelson Economic Development Partnership. I want to thank the City of Nelson and Community Futures for their outstanding performance in the development of the economic development partnership. The NEDP wrapped up a successful 2007...focusing on 5 priority areas:

- 1) Business retention and expansion**
- 2) Communication gathering and sharing**
- 3) Sector strengthening**
- 4) Infrastructure**
- 5) Business investment and attraction**

The 2008 work plan continues to build on programs already underway, while also focusing primarily on Business Retention and Expansion, as well as Business Investment and Attraction. We are currently updating and improving on our regional investment strategy through Invest Kootenay. The lure piece and website are undergoing some major changes and should be ready for a re-launch at the upcoming Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments convention being held in Nelson in mid April. We will also be focusing on continuing to build our ambassador program within the community, and getting the Invest Kootenay lure piece brochures out to local realtors, and accommodators.

Other economic redevelopment action items that will continue over from the NEDP 2007 work plan will include;

- 1) Investment and relocation inquiry contacts through the Chamber of Commerce**

- 2) Dialogue with the Business Community and Business Sector Consultations**
- 3) Business Peer Mentorship**
- 4) Business training Workshops**
- 5) Skills and Labour Shortage Strategies**

Another important initiative that the Chamber is involved with is the Nelson Area Tourism Partnership. We are in the process of finalizing a regional plan that will incorporate Nelson and Kootenay Lake.

The NATP is a model for Nelson's New Destination Marketing Organization which is designed to provide a leadership role in maximizing our tourism opportunities for the region, while also leveraging other regional resources, and creating a sustainable marketing organization. All in all it will continue to be another busy and important year for the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you for being an important part of our past and future prosperity."



West Kootenay Chambers bring the regions issues to the provincial agenda

Chambers of commerce from across the region met in Rossland to ensure the key issues facing local businesses in the region will be addressed at the BC Chamber of Commerce AGM in May in Whistler.

Representatives of these chambers identified child care and rural transportation as issues that must be addressed by the provincial government to enhance the economic prosperity of communities, the region and the province.

Chambers in the region have elevated childcare to the top of the agenda for the provincial business community. This has led to initiatives around funding, as well as initiatives to enhance employment and recruitment in the child care field

“The Chambers in the region must be congratulated for the role they have played in moving this issue to the forefront of the provincial policy agenda,” states John Winter President and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce. “Despite the fact that we have seen government act on several of our recommendations the bottom line for businesses is, if child-care is not addressed in a comprehensive way it will have a huge impact on businesses ability to remain viable, let alone competitive and profitable.”

Through the local Chambers in the region the business community will take a strong message to the BC Chamber that the province must guarantee quality, affordable child care in every community of this province. The resolution to be presented to delegates at the BC Chamber AGM will call on the government to give immediate priority to developing, funding and implementing a comprehensive Child Care Strategy for BC.

Rural transportation is another key focus for District 8. “We believe government needs to expand and continue their efforts to date and create a provincial transportation plan that will support cost-effective and accessible transportation to businesses and communities in the rural areas,” continued Winter. “The Chambers in the region will be submitting a resolution to the BCCC with the goal that this policy will gain support from all Chambers and will have a significant impact on

government to hear the call of rural communities needing assistance to support their economic sustainability as well as lowering their carbon foot prints by creating a transportation plan that will be driven by a collaborative voice of stakeholders and meet the needs of rural BC.”

BC Chamber AGM Policy Platform

The 2008 policy development process has an additional component this year that is worthy of some focus, that is the policy priorities identified by the Board of Directors of the BC Chamber. Below you will find an outline of the parameters of the priority areas identified by the Board

A Vibrant Resource Sector

British Columbia is, and will remain for the immediate future, a resource economy. The Chamber will continue to advocate the prudent and sustainable development of British Columbia’s vast natural and energy resources in a manner that creates competitive advantages to the BC economy while creating export opportunities for resource and energy developers and jobs and prosperity for BC communities. Government has a critical role to play in ensuring our resource industries are as competitive as possible on the global stage by providing the structure and assistance that encourages investment in these critical industries.

Competitive Regulation and Taxation

As an open, trading jurisdiction BC is reliant upon a competitive tax and regulatory regime at the federal, provincial and municipal level.

As important as the overall level of taxation, the distribution of the tax burden and the targeting of fiscal incentives in key sectors are equally important issues affecting businesses, as are regulatory obligations they face.

Crime and Public Safety

While it is true that overall crime rates are declining in most major categories criminal activity remains a blight on a positive business environment. Where it is prevalent, it restricts business activity and lowers profits, increase challenges with retaining staff, and increases the cost of doing business. Improving BC's record on crime will require a concerted effort from all levels of government, as well as from police, judiciary and those responsible for addressing root causes such as housing the homeless, treating the addicted, as well as educators.

Skills and Labour Shortage

No longer "looming", the shortage of skilled workers and new job entrants is now a direct threat to British Columbia's economy and the well-being of industries and communities throughout the province. As an issue, the skills and labour shortage is particularly impacting the viability of small businesses in BC.

While solutions to the skills shortage will need to be driven by the business community government has a critical role to play in ensuring an adequate supply of workers, as well as providing the structure and resources to encourage training of the workforce, particularly for small business.

Transportation

Government at both the federal and provincial level must take a strategic approach to streamlining the movement of

goods and services province wide. This approach must address the connectivity of small, more remote communities, as well as providing the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the continued contribution of our resource industries to the provincial economy. Finally, government must take a proactive and imaginative approach to managing transportation demand in our growing urban centres.

To achieve these complex goals government must establish clear direction and policy around the importance of the provincial transportation network, as well as clear direction on the method and structure for funding and governance of transportation projects and regions.

The Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce will be well represented at the AGM that takes place in Whistler May 21st thru 24th. Delegates will include President Janice Morrison, Executive Director Tom Thomson and District 8 Board member Brent Holowaychuck.

**Got an event coming up?
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and post it to our on-line
calendar. It's free!**

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business information to
our business database.**

That's free too!



Supported by 2010 Legacies Now and the Province of BC, Spirit of BC is a province-wide initiative that promotes community innovation, pride and excellence, and involves British Columbians in the opportunities arising from the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The core of the Spirit of BC program is a network of more than 90 Spirit of BC Community Committees representing over 200 communities across the province.

Spirit of BC Community Committees

Spirit of BC committees build partnerships in their communities to support local programs and ensure residents share in the benefits of BC hosting the 2010 Winter Games.

The committees are made up of community representatives from a variety of organizations and sectors such as:

- Non-government organizations
- Sport and recreation sector
- Municipal governments
- Chambers of Commerce
- The arts community
- Tourism industry
- Literacy groups
- First Nations
- Volunteers

Spirit of BC committees and their partners also lead events and activities during Spirit of BC Week, an annual celebration of British Columbia and its unique communities.

Spirit of BC committees help create community opportunities in a number of areas, including sport and recreation, arts and culture, literacy, volunteerism, business, and tourism.

Spirit of BC Vision

The Spirit of BC Program promotes the values of community innovation, pride and excellence to create unique and lasting legacies for British Columbians leading up to and beyond the 2010 Games.

Spirit of BC Mission

The Spirit of BC Program will inspire local citizens and engage current and future community leaders in the economic, cultural, and social success of their communities and celebrate the ambitions and achievements of individuals and the community as a whole.

It will collaborate with government, business, educators and local community-based organizations to ensure that legacies address the strengths, needs and opportunities in each community, including literacy, the arts, health, sport, and recreation.

The Spirit of BC Program will develop a deep and rich community resource of volunteers committed to the values of sustainable and engaged communities, healthy living practices and lifelong learning. As committed community leaders, Spirit of BC volunteers will value partnership, diversity, creativity and community spirit.

The Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a community meeting in Nelson April 22nd. Anyone interested in taking part or finding out more information please contact the Chamber at 250 352-3433, or email tom@discovernelson.com



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5. What are your greatest weaknesses?
6. What do you want to be doing five years from now?
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10. Do you have any questions for me?



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Trips off the Beaten Track

By David Volk of Seattle Magazine

I've always found a sense of joy in discovery. Before I was married, I loved being the first to find clubs that hipsters missed, restaurants my foodie friends hadn't heard of and the occasional vacation spot others had overlooked.

I have discovered just such a place in the small Victorian town of Nelson, B.C. It's more *Mayberry R.F.D.* than *CSI: Miami* and more "Hip to Be Square" than "The In Crowd," but that's what makes it so cool—in an uncool kind of way. The few Seattleites I know who have heard of this southeastern B.C. burg three hours north of Spokane think of it as a ski town—and, indeed, there is great

skiing in the nearby Selkirk Mountains. But I like it as a spring and summer escape. With snow melted, there are plenty of warm weather pursuits, including biking, hiking in provincial parks, kayaking and even swimming in the brilliantly cool waters of the western arm of glacier-fed Kootenay Lake.

Winding roads hug the lakeshore and branch off into the hills leading to heritage sites that include the deserted mining town of Sandon, the peaceful Kohan Reflection Garden and the Nikkei Centre, a former Japanese internment camp just outside of New Denver.

And the warm family pool and horseshoe-shaped cave at Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort (about 30 miles from Nelson) provide a great end to any day trip, regardless of the outdoor temperature. Finish your soak with homemade ice cream from a stand across the street.

The area surrounding Nelson offers many diversions; we spent two days on the outskirts before heading into downtown. But once there, we found more than 350 heritage buildings, all preserved by the city, including a granite Beaux Arts château-style courthouse on Ward Street and the three-floor, brick-turreted former mercantile building that presides over Baker Street.

The many Victorian homes in and around the city center give it a turn-of-the-century feel with art galleries, coffee cafés, boutiques and a school of Oriental medicine providing a modern vibe.

Fans of Steve Martin may recognize the city's Victorian streetscape from his 1987 movie *Roxanne*, which was filmed in Nelson; you can still take a *Roxanne* walking tour. As you tour the town, it's likely that you'll find, as we did, local residents who are just as friendly as the movie suggests.

We followed the advice of locals, and hiked the short Pulpit Rock Trail outside of town, which leads to an overlook with a beautiful scenic view of downtown Nelson back across the lake. We also discovered a seven-kilometer day hike to Kaslo Lake on a marmot-filled trail that offers pretty glacier views. From here, you can continue a little farther for a glimpse of roughing it late-1800s style at the Slocan Chief Cabin, a turn-of-the-century miner's cabin that's now a museum, or go 1.2 kilometres to the Kookanee Glacier Cabin, built in honour of the son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who died in an avalanche in the area. Had we planned ahead, we could have stayed overnight at this well-equipped, attractive cabin.

After a week around Nelson, I found myself rethinking my vacation priorities. When I was younger, I couldn't escape my small town fast enough. While I still love to visit cosmopolitan San Francisco and Vancouver, Nelson is the type of place that whispers "vacation home." And I just may heed that call.

This article was reprinted from the March Issue of Seattle Magazine. The writer tracked down local photographer Phil Best, following a visit to the Discovernelson website. Phil was able to provide the writer with a series of photos that were utilized in conjunction with the article. One thing we are all proud of is the amount of media coverage that Nelson and area receives. The Chamber of Commerce actively promotes the community through numerous marketing and advertising venues, and works in partnership with other local businesses to promote the region through paid advertising, and by supporting writers in their quest for editorial story ideas.

Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

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