

# ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN BC'S NORTHWEST

## Individual Forum Report

### Hazelton

Participants at the Hazelton forum insisted that any financial support from the government should meet long-term needs and objectives and that this support should be made conditional on performance; thought should be placed into doing what's best for the community, not just simply what's cheapest. The shortage of skilled labour was acknowledged, as was the need for more money to be invested in non-traditional businesses like community recycling. Of particular interest was the promotion of creative initiatives including encouraging young people to think of a small business career and the development of cultural and ecotourism.

The lively discussion on the social safety net led to recommendations including: better funding for First Nations health programs, focusing on preventative and proactive health initiatives, increasing the length of the Employment Insurance Benefit, improving addictions assistance, developing secure and healthy local food options and offering green housing assistance.

In regards to infrastructure, the group felt that a regional planner could be introduced to support the development of a big picture plan. Particular interest was expressed in building trails, social housing and a new arena with a focus on employing youth 18 – 25 who should be supported to develop new skills.

As a final point, those present stressed the need for a strategic economic development community plan that is clean and green. The region has its success stories and government should study why they worked.

**Facilitators included:** Neal Erickson, Peter Newbery, Shannon MacPhail, Scott Graham