

ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN BC'S NORTHWEST

Individual Forum Report

Kitimat

There were many common themes at the Kitimat forum seen in other regions. Among them was a skepticism about bailouts from government to industry, the point was emphasized that profitable companies should not be eligible for the bailout funds. Where bailouts are deemed essential it is key to maintain rigorous oversight to ensure the money does what it is intended to do.

There was agreement that the EI system is in need of a serious overhaul. The hard earned money that workers have paid into the EI is often not available to those who have lost their job. The point was made that EI is not the same as social assistance or welfare, in that the money comes directly from workers to be used should they one day lose their job. Also there was some frustration that many government employees tasked with delivering EI were not overly familiar with the rules themselves.

Environmental concerns were also of concern, and the idea of applying a Green lens to any infrastructure projects was well received. In terms of infrastructure projects it was emphasized that the benefit to the local community is exponentially higher when local labour is used to carry out the jobs. Also, the formula that calls for local communities to match dollars to receive funding for infrastructure projects was resoundingly rejected. This backward plan does nothing but make rich communities richer and leaves those places that need the most help without the aid they need.

Facilitators included: Joanne Hildebrandt, Tony Brady, Denise O'Neil, Roger Leclerc, Cheryl Rumley, Austin Byrne