

# **ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN BC'S NORTHWEST**

## **Individual Forum Report**

### **Haida Gwai'i / Queen Charlotte Islands**

After a few delays, two forums were held on Haida Gwai'i/ Queen Charlotte Islands. The first meeting was held in Masset and the second in Queen Charlotte City. A number of people came out for very productive and energizing conversations. A key focus of discussion was the need to reform the EI system. We need greater flexibility for those seeking temporary help after a job loss and need to create eligibility requirements that accommodate seasonal workers. Participants also said that we should look at letting small business owners participate in the EI program.

Rural communities must not be neglected when discussing government spending, particularly infrastructure projects. People pointed out that the islands need recreation, health and education infrastructure in order to attract and retain people in shrinking communities. These projects should make use of local labour and materials to get the most economic bang for every buck. There was specific mention that broadband internet services need to be a priority for governments moving forward.

There was considerable opposition around the room to full-scale government bailouts. Many felt that bailouts merely reward incompetence and are generally not beneficial. Instead we should be creating legislation that encourages social and green enterprises which could create both economically and environmentally sustainable jobs for the future.

On the subject of taxes there were differing points of view. Some felt taxes are simply too high, while others felt that if government services were to improve and service fees reduced, there would be less objection to higher taxes.

In spite of logistical challenges in setting a date, the forums were well worth the wait for all the enthusiastic participants.