

ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN BC'S NORTHWEST

Individual Forum Report

Smithers

Participants in the Smithers' Forum were as hesitant about the recently proposed bailouts as other constituents in the riding due to the fear that there is no control or accountability once the money is out the door. There was an overwhelming sense that any such effort should focus on the worker rather than the company.

Of particular importance to this group were significant improvements to those programs intended to support people who need them. Greater access to affordable housing was stressed with emphasis on the living conditions of seniors and help with interest rates. People felt that there should be increased assistance to those who require child support. It was argued that job training and education need to be made affordable and that the minimum wage should be higher.

The detailed and extensive discussion surrounding infrastructure covered such topics as improving transportation corridors like Highway 16, expanding power lines, developing tourism projects, upgrading the hospital, broadening libraries and museums and better managing our renewable resources (especially fisheries). The group also highlighted the use of northwest labour wherever possible. Finally, there was general support for considering any infrastructure spending through a green lens. The government should, it was felt, focus on green technology and job creation opportunities in the tidal, wind and geothermal sectors as well as through recycling initiatives and the greening of homes. More importantly the group encouraged the promotion of northwest successes such as the Telkwa meat packing plant. Facilitators included: Dave Stene, Steve Hidber, Bob Henderson, Meara Brown, Bob Haslett and Rick Apperson