

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 22nd, 2025, 7:30 AM
Regional District of Central Okanagan, Woodhaven Boardroom
1450 K.L.O. Road, Kelowna**

✓ = attended X = Absent * Not required A = Alternate Attended

Advisory Committee Executive:

✓	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon, Chair
✓	Larson, Janice, Past-Chair
✓	Quinn, Paula, Vice-Chair

✓	Nagy, Angela
✓	Malcolm, Ryan

Advisory Committee:

X	Alexander, Andrea
✓	Alluri, Rama
X	Ballantyne, Lisanne
✓	Berrie, Carla
✓	Bowles, Ron
X	Bruns, Myles
✓	Burleigh, Mark
✓	Carnio, Alex
X	Collins, Dave
X	Dawn, Jeremy
X	Douglas, Laurel
✓	Dyas, Tom
✓	Friesen, Jason
✓	Ferreira, Christina
✓	Gatzke, Alan

A	Harper, Shauna
✓	Harvey, Maryse
X	Ireland, Blair
✓	Jones, Garrett
✓	Kam, Michelle
X	Labrecque, Cory
✓	Lake, Brea
✓	Lovegrove, Gord
✓	Metvedt, David
✓	Mullings, Dale
X	Popoff, Chantel
✓	Rezania, Sepideh
A	Ritchie, Geoff
A	Robinson, Heather
✓	Schlosser, Joanna

X	Selby, Robert
✓	Spencer, Sandra
X	Sulentich, Ruth
✓	Threlfall, Rich
✓	Thurnheer, Laura
X	Walker-Matthews, Ellen
✓	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
X	Widmer, Larry
X	Wolf, Mike
✓	Wong, Roger

Staff and Consultants:

✓	Mallory, Krista
✓	Lesack, Sascha
✓	Rambe, Mohana
✓	Ververda, Brianne

✓	Walraven, Jen
X	Weston, Eva
✓	Foster, Jodie
X	Ginter, Sally

X	Miller, Tory
X	Stark Leader, Myrna

Guests:

1. Call to Order

Chair Sharon Hughes-Geekie called the meeting to order at 7:40 am.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair acknowledged our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tñxʷúlaʔxʷ (land) of the syilx / Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. We recognize, honour, and respect the syilx / Okanagan lands upon which we live, work, and play.

3. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of November 27, 2024, unanimously approved.

4. US/Canada Relations Discussion

Rama Alluri, Manager, Business Centre, BDC

Rama gave an overview of how the BDC sees the evolving tariff situation. The COEDC will continue to follow and look at ways we can work to support our exporters and businesses in the region. The potential impact of US tariffs would depend on if Canada decides to retaliate with tariffs of our own. With no retaliation the Bank of Canada (BOC) could start cutting interest rates. With possible lowered demand for Canadian exports there could be a slowing economy, higher unemployment and falling inflation. With a weaker economy there could be more aggressive rate cuts. With retaliation the BOC rate could rise to counteract a possible recession. The GDP forecast is based on 10% and 25% tariffs and would fall depending on interest rates as well.

Strategies for business owners include diversifying revenue streams and supply chains, trying to find local suppliers whenever possible, and being prudent with efficiency measures. Entrepreneurs should develop a banking relationship to ensure access to working capital, potential principal payment postponement on long-term debt and invest in technology automation. One of the biggest barriers to diversification of revenue streams will be finding new markets. The Canadian Export Development Corporation can provide some support finding partners in other countries. Look for the silver lining and take an optimistic outlook. We can encourage Canadians to stay in Canada from a tourism perspective. Canadian manufacturers can step up to increase capacity to still provide to the US market while our dollar is weaker. Some producers may choose to move their production to Mexico, for example.

5. COEDC Service & Major Projects

Krista Mallory, Manager, COEDC

The COEDC is a service of the RDCO functioning within the Communications and Information Services department and accountable to the Regional Board. We provide economic development services and work with partner communities to implement these regional services. The Mandate of the Advisory Committee (AC) is to serve as a forum for discussion between member municipalities, industry, and regional economic development service delivery organizations to increase knowledge

of economic development opportunities and needs throughout the Central Okanagan. The AC is composed of subgroups including industry sector representatives who are elected, appointed elected officials, business and partner organization representatives, and an executive committee. Our Connector and Agriculture Support Programs are continuing with consultant support. New members to the Advisory Committee are encouraged to and can contribute by participating in the Connector Program. **See attached presentation.**

2024 Highlights – Site visits, Okanagan Young Professionals Collective, Advisory Committee, New Residents Resources, Data Portal, Economic Indicators and Economic Climate presentations.

2025 Major Projects: Strategic Plan Launch will be shared in February, and we've developed our Operational Plan for this year to work toward the strategic directions that are emerging. A big project will be our Workforce Profile and Strategy. The scope will be determined by the amount of funding we receive for this project. We'll be doing a Business Resource Review/Refresh and developing a tool to connect businesses to these resources in the way that entrepreneurs want to access them and assess any gaps such as that left by the loss of Small Business BC. OKGo Activities in partnership with Tourism Kelowna, Accelerate Okanagan, UBCO and Okanagan College include investment and talent attraction and regional promotion work. We'll be attending the World Agri-tech Innovation & future food tech Summit, Web Summit tech conference, hosting inbound delegations to our region, and continue to build on our existing relationships with Canadian Trade Commissioners and BC Trade and Investment representatives. We'll continue working on Digital Marketing and have included Indigenous Business stories and promotional assets.

Questions – Some employers feel a disconnect with millennial employee expectations and wonder if the workforce profile will assist them in writing better job descriptions and developing benefit plans to make their businesses more attractive to potential employees. The project plan is still under development, but we anticipate that the profile will help illustrate which competencies and skill sets are currently available and needed going forward, and that the strategy portion will help bridge the gaps.

6. Introduction of New Advisory Committee Members

Alexandra Carnio, CEO, ProducKIDvity – (Industry: Childcare)

Alan Gatzke, Owner, Gatzke Orchards – (Industry: Agriculture)

Garrett Jones, VP of Corporate Sustainability, Delphi Canada – (Industry: Professional Services/Business Resiliency)

David Metvedt, CEO, Swift Aerial Surveys – (Industry: Technology/Agriculture)

Joanna Schlosser, CEO, Niche Wine Company – (Industry: Viticulture)

Roger Wong, Owner & Winemaker, Intrigue Wines – (Industry: Viticulture)

7. Speed Networking

Get to know your fellow members and understand their varied perspectives, networks and experience.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: Recommended to join the Connector Program to share your networks and help connect newer entrepreneurs.

8. New Business

- Paula Quinn is participating in a dance fundraiser for the Central Okanagan Hospice Association, please reach out to her if you'd like to support the efforts.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 am.
