

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 26th, 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:

X	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon, Chair
✓	Larson, Janice, Past Chair
✓	Malcolm, Ryan

X	Nagy, Angela
X	Quinn, Paula, Vice-Chair

Advisory Committee:

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

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

✓	Schlosser, Joanna
✓	Selby, Robert
✓	Spencer, Sandra
✓	Sulentich, Ruth
X	Threlfall, Rich
✓	Thurnheer, Laura
✓	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
A	Widmer, Larry
X	Wolf, Mike
✓	Wong, Roger

Staff and Consultants:

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

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

✓	Miller, Tory
✓	Stark Leader, Myrna
✓	Vann Struth, Jamie

Guests:

Nguyen, Don

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1. Call to Order

Past-Chair Janice Larson called the meeting to order at 7:35 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 January 22, 2025, unanimously approved.

4. Roadmap to Resiliency: COEDC Strategy 2025-2030

Krista Mallory, Manager, COEDC

Jamie Vann Struth, Senior Manager, Economic Advisory Deloitte

Our previous Strategic Plan came out just before the Covid years and the theme of resiliency continues to crop up. This new plan will help us help our businesses, workforce and economy be the most prepared for whatever comes our way. We translate this plan into action items and correspond with RDCO strategic directions to develop our annual priorities and work plans with resources and measurables assigned. The COEDC reports these out quarterly and will be accelerating a regional supply chain database tool this year. We are working with regional indigenous partners and engaging in this plan in the spirit of reconciliation.

See presentation attached.

A rapid response team as a proactive strategy for businesses experiencing immediate significant challenges to reach out to would be a great resource. In our region we can provide a lot of support through direct 1 on 1 connectivity as included in our work plans.

Infrastructure improvements aren't in the realm of the work that the COEDC does, however we can be a conduit for sharing the needs of the region with the appropriate channels.

KPIs that are quantifiable will be shared via our quarterly reports. The priorities with time constraints within the 5-year plan get broken down into annual priorities and the focus may shift in response to events that affect the regional economy.

Tourism fits in as an export industry needing to adapt and build internally rather than attracting new tourism operators.

Agriculture as a core product of the strategy has business growth and enhancement but also needs tools to help pivot in how farmers do business. Moving from commodity production to vertical integration or on-farm processing is critical to the long-term future of agriculture. Our resilience and

innovation pillars will help develop tools to help agriculture operators pivot to new markets and new ways of processing.

5. Canada/U.S. Relations Discussion

Krista Mallory, Manager, COEDC

- COEDC response – the impact to the Central Okanagan is anticipated to be very complex. We're hearing a lot of uncertainty and whatever the changes will be, the COEDC will connect with businesses to understand the impacts and offer support, as well as create resources for now and in the long-term. The tariff resource page on our website is a first step to keep businesses informed and engaged for feedback, help assess exposure, and plan for impacts.
- We are creating a manufacturing sector supply database tool and looking to include information on more local suppliers adding to what they could possibly make even if not doing so already.
- 1 on 1 connections reveal exposures to supply chain counter tariffs, how specialized a product is, what types of customers a business has and much uncertainty. We'll continue our outreach efforts and would appreciate the Advisory Committee guiding your connections to us so we can help them with planning resources.
- We are planning a roundtable event for industry in the coming weeks. We're looking to hear from industries about what supports they need, where the risks are, and what opportunities can we capitalize on.

Questions for consideration:

- What is your industry/organization doing to prepare and what supports do you need? The tourism industry is monitoring and pulling information in from the Tourism Industry Association of BC and BC Hotel Association. The key theme is uncertainty, and the threat is greater than the action at this point, but this trickles down and affects the desire and economic ability to travel. The BCHA does not feel tariffs will come into play. TIABC's pulse survey responses indicate a majority feeling that tariffs will affect business. They recognize that forestry and mining will affect the tourism industry but there will likely be an increase in domestic travel. With rising inflation there may be fewer discretionary dollars for travel.
- The manufacturing sector is looking at sourcing from other free trade countries. There are opportunities to do tariff code shifts. Benchmark studies can show customers that relative costs may not be increasing. A US based tariff lawyer can help. They're looking at comparative products to get qualified for approved domestic suppliers.
- Wine producers have imported grape must and their wines are a product of the US but made in Canada, so consumer perception is a big influence. Grapes are thankfully not tariffed as they may need to outsource again. There is potential for interprovincial trade improvement. Vine replant stock is primarily coming from Europe.

- Municipalities primarily buy locally but can be stuck under tariff agreements by legislation. If purchasing can be supported by provincial legislative changes that would be helpful. If tenders come in too high some projects may be put on hold.
- The agriculture industry is split. Apple producers are currently responding favourably to the tariff situation. The cherry industry is not reliant on US markets. They're still looking for data collection and more local representation to lobby with ministers.
- Large machinery project procurement may need to change, and the construction and development industry is approaching this with caution rather than haste.
- Tariffs are the responsibility of the Federal government. Provincially and locally, there are some measures we can take. There is responsive work being undertaken despite the frequently changing landscape. Some businesses report supply chain challenges. The Province also needs data from businesses to determine how to support them, such as if they will need to lay people off. Customs brokers and lawyers can be very helpful for businesses that export to the US. EMC Canada and Greater Vancouver Board of Trade have good resources as well.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: The COEDC is looking for a couple members who are interested in providing feedback as we plan the industry roundtable event. Please reach out to Eva Weston.

6. School of Computing: Partnership for Academic Excellence and Economic Development in the Okanagan

Don Nguyen, Manager, Research & Strategic Initiatives, I.K. Barber Faculty of Science, UBCO

Don shared information about new initiatives at UBCO with the integrated computer science and engineering hub for research and education. This will help with innovation in the region and providing a talent pipeline that is aligned with industry. They attract vast investment in research and partner with businesses in the region. They will develop a degree called Master of Computing as a professional program and are looking for feedback about it via a survey.

See presentation attached.

7. New Business

- Kelowna Chamber trade policy panel March 5th at UBCO
- OYP Collective Coffee Social February 27th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 am.