



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: On Thursday, January 14, 2021, staff and the consultant for RDCO's Economic Development Commission (COEDC) presented to the Board's Governance & Services Committee the proposed *2021 COEDC Priorities*. Committee members provided feedback on the priorities, and gave input on priorities and tasks that members feel are missing from the Commission's plan. At the end of the discussion the Committee recommended approval of the *2021 COEDC Priorities* to the Regional District Board as presented.

DISCUSSION: In the spring and summer of 2020, during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, COEDC staff facilitated a significant number of Industry Roundtable discussions to identify challenges facing businesses, promote response and recovery assistance programs, and consider COEDC's strategic plan — *Moving Forward to 2025* — in light of the new COVID-defined operating environment. In the early fall of 2020, COEDC staff met in facilitated strategic planning sessions with the COEDC Advisory Council and the RDCO Board of Directors to review economic recovery projections and COVID-19 impacts on the regional economy. Participants in these sessions also discussed the region's needs at various stages of recovery, including in the immediate term.

Input provided through the various consultation efforts confirmed the overall soundness of COEDC's strategic plan with its four strategic pillars and accompanying actions. The input also highlighted, however, the importance in the immediate term of the "Building Business" pillar which is focused on efforts to support the region's business base.

COEDC staff took the input from the consultation sessions to refine the Commission's priorities for 2021. The resulting *2021 COEDC Priorities* plan was presented to RDCO Board's Governance & Services Committee on January 14, 2021. The Committee was asked to provide feedback on the priorities under the four pillars, with particular attention being paid to items listed under "Building Business". The Committee was also asked to identify any priorities or tasks that in the Committee's view were missing from the plan.

OUTCOMES: The Committee expressed support for the work of the COEDC in bringing together parties from a variety of business sectors and public agencies, helping to coordinate response and recovery initiatives, keeping businesses informed of assistance

programs, and making available data and other information resources to decision-makers. Committee members were also impressed with the initiatives recently unveiled by COEDC, including CityViz and OKGO.

Over the course of the discussion, the Committee made six suggestions to Commission staff:

1. Provide more regular information updates to the Board.

The Committee is eager to receive regular and frequent briefings on recovery indicators, challenges facing businesses in the region, recovery programs and initiatives of other orders of government, regional efforts being undertaken to promote immediate and long-term economic development in the Central Okanagan, and other matters. Regular briefings, it was noted, would enable the Board to effectively contribute towards advocacy efforts aimed at benefitting the regional economy.

2. Reporting on actions.

Through their regular meetings and round table discussions with local businesses and associations, COEDC is well positioned to identify the range of actions to be taken in support of the regional economy. The Board wishes to learn about, understand and support these actions.

3. Highlight efforts aimed at helping vulnerable sectors.

In the November, 2020, session with the RDCO Board, and again in the January, 2021, session with the Committee, COEDC staff drew attention to the "K-shaped" recovery to COVID-19 that is underway in the region and beyond. This type of recovery underscores the significant challenges that industries such as hospitality, tourism and retail are facing in maintaining employment levels and generating business. In view of these challenges, Committee members expressed a desire for COEDC to focus its efforts, where possible, on the most vulnerable sectors.

4. Work to reach unorganized businesses.

COEDC works closely with associations such as the Chambers of Commerce that represent member businesses. Not all businesses in the Central Okanagan, however, are members of a Chamber or another organization with which COEDC interacts. Committee members highlighted the importance of ensuring that all businesses, irrespective of membership status, are engaged in recovery discussions to the extent possible.

5. Do not lose focus on the other pillars.

The Committee understands the importance of the priorities under the "Building Business" pillar of the strategic plan. The Committee noted as well, however, that priorities under the other three pillars are also important and should not be ignored. Particular attention was directed towards priorities aimed at meeting the needs of businesses for workers.

6. Do less or seek additional resources.

The Committee understands that COEDC has limited resources with which to fulfill its mandate. On a go-forward basis, COEDC staff are encouraged to refine their work priorities where possible to eliminate actions deemed less important. Alternatively — and more likely — staff are encouraged to present a proposal for additional resources to the Board for consideration.