

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2020-07-14

From: Melissa Geddert, Planner I

File No: 6430-30-013

Subject: Fraser Valley Clean Economy Spotlight at Globe 2020 – Summary Report

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board receive the attached summary “Clean Economy in the Fraser Valley - Spotlight on the Fraser Valley Session at GLOBE 2020” as prepared by Delphi Group;

AND THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board forward the Summary to municipal and Indigenous partners and regional clean economy stakeholders.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

BACKGROUND

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) clean economy initiative has been a multiphase project which highlights a broad menu of clean economy opportunities in the region. The initiative began in 2018 when the FVRD engaged Delphi Group to undertake research and analysis to better understand the existing clean economy sectors in the Fraser Valley and to identify growth opportunities related to the region’s clean economy. The FVRD undertook this initiative to monitor the region’s economy per the current Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and to inform the RGS update. The resulting *Clean Economy Study* provided an overview of clean economy sector opportunities that build on the region’s existing economic strengths. The report was presented to the FVRD Board in June 2019. At that time, the Board directed staff to advance the information presented in the study through a public forum to further explore and promote opportunities for growing the region’s clean economy.

DISCUSSION

To address the Board’s direction, the FVRD continued to work with the Delphi Group and partnered with local economic development stakeholders to collaborate on holding a special session at this year’s International GLOBE 2020 event on February 11, 2020. The event’s purpose was to highlight the FVRD’s potential for clean economic growth and to cultivate connections and potential partnerships to support clean economy projects and economic development opportunities. The resulting session was titled

Opportunities in BC's Clean Economy: A Spotlight on the Fraser Valley. The Chair of the FVRD Board, FVRD staff and project partners presented clean economy opportunities to a targeted audience of local stakeholders, government officials, potential investors, and cleantech companies attending the event. The session promoted regional collaboration and partners were able to prioritize, identify and showcase their top clean economy opportunities.

The attached summary document discusses in detail the stakeholder engagement process to collaborate on the creation of the session, provides an outline of the resulting GLOBE session, highlights key takeaways and feedback from the event, and outlines the next steps and future priorities based on outcomes and discussions at the event.

Using a panel format, regional priorities and community initiatives were presented to Globe participants by the following presenters at the session:

- Paul Shorthouse, Senior Director, Delphi Group (session facilitator)
- Jason Lum, Chair, FVRD Board of Directors and Councillor, City of Chilliwack
- Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning, FVRD
- Vern May, Economic Development Manager, City of Abbotsford
- Greg Cross, Director of Public Works, Seabird Island Band
- Raymond Szabada, Chairman of the Board, XLRator
- Dr. Lenore Newman, Canada Research Chair in Food Security and the Environment and Director of Food and Agriculture Institute, University of Fraser Valley

Clean economy opportunities that were presented align with the RGS objective in promoting economic strength and resiliency, as well as with the Province's CleanBC Climate Plan. The presentations were centred on the key themes outlined in the original *Clean Economy Study*, which are:

- Sustainable resource and ecosystem management
- Green and sustainable transportation
- Green and high-performance buildings
- Renewable energy supply and storage
- Knowledge and innovation

Following the presentation, session participants were given the opportunity to ask questions on the information presented during a formal question and answer period. The event was a success and the overall response to the projects and opportunities presented was positive. Along with showcasing the FVRD's clean economy opportunities, project partners were able to make meaningful connections with local and international cleantech companies, investors, and government officials from both the BC Provincial and Federal government.

With the completion of this event, the FVRD is continuing the clean economy momentum. Although initiated under separate direction from the Board, the FVRD is currently working to address internet connectivity gaps which have been identified as a limitation to expanding the FVRD clean economy. The FVRD has initiated a Rural Broadband Connectivity Strategy which will assess current conditions

and provide a strategy to improve high-speed broadband internet access for the rural areas in the FVRD. Improved connectivity facilitates new clean economic development.

Inconsistent internet connectivity has been widely exposed during Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the ability to shift on-line is restricted in areas with limited internet or cell phone service. Continuing to build critical underlying infrastructure in telecommunication and information technology offers broad economic benefits to the region and, more particularly, to rural areas. Improved connectivity offers opportunities for residents to work from home, be employed with companies in distant cities, and to connect to a global marketplace through electronic commerce, which is vital to community sustainability and growth. Reliable connectivity creates new opportunities beyond the reach of the local economic base and allows residents to remotely acquire the skills necessary to participate in the knowledge-based and cleantech economy.

COST

Participation in GLOBE 2020 and associated consulting fees cost approximately \$35,000, which was planned for and expensed to the Strategic Planning & Initiatives budget (601), over both 2019 and 2020.

CONCLUSION

The Spotlight Session at GLOBE 2020 provided a practical and efficient avenue to advance the region's economy in a manner that also showcased the region in promoting livable, healthy and resilient communities. Collaboration with municipal and Indigenous economic development agencies and other key regional stakeholders was instrumental for the success of this session, as well as engaging Delphi Group and leveraging their experience in investment attraction and connection with the GLOBE event. Many of the panelists involved in the presentation were able to make connections for advancing clean economy opportunities.

COMMENTS BY:

Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning: Reviewed and supported

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsbrough, Director of Financial Services: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.