
NEWS RELEASE

Chamber launches forums to tackle competitiveness slide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kelowna, June 6, 2014 – B.C.’s economy faces a serious challenge: our businesses’ global competitiveness has been sliding for some time. Since 2009, Canada has slid to 14th place from 9th in the World Economic Forum’s annual list of the world’s most competitive countries. Additionally, a recent Conference Board of Canada report found that B.C. is lagging many of its peer Canadian jurisdictions, ranking 7th for productivity compared to other provinces.

To find solutions to this challenge, the BC Chamber of Commerce has partnered with the B.C. government to launch Competitiveness BC Forums. Through these forums, the BC Chamber is canvassing businesses’ ideas about what problems they’re facing, and any solutions that can help businesses can better compete.

These forums will hone in on barriers to B.C.’s competitiveness and productivity. It is important to understand that improving these metrics is not about getting employees to work harder. Productivity is actually about finding innovative ways to meet customer needs. It’s about creating an atmosphere in the workplace that makes work more satisfying for all. It’s about being more efficient - learning to use less effort, space, equipment and time to produce goods and deliver services.

The first of the forums, generously funded by the B.C. government, was held Thursday, June 5th in West Kelowna.

“Business leaders from Kelowna and the Central Okanagan region kicked off this consultation process with strong engagement and great ideas,” said John Winter, president and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce, who was in Kelowna for the forum. “As always, B.C.’s businesses bring critical insights to policy challenges, and the Kelowna forum demonstrated that. We look forward to hearing more great ideas from more business communities as we continue our cross-B.C. forums.”

Upcoming forums are scheduled for:

- June 18: Vancouver
- June 19: Terrace
- June 25: Prince George
- June 26: Fort St. John

- Fall: Additional forums will be announced that will include events in the Kootenays, Vancouver Island and Thompson Regions.

The half-day sessions are being led by a local business leader and will include a roundtable dialogue on best practices and ideas to enhance competitiveness. Participants will be surveyed for feedback on the sessions and to offer their input on improving competitiveness. As many as 30 business owners and senior managers from companies in each region are expected to attend.

The target group for these initial forums is business owners or senior management personnel from medium-sized business (10 to 200 employees), that are actively engaged in the following industries: manufacturing, forestry, mining, energy, high tech, and ship building. Participation is by invitation-only.

In addition, the BC Chamber of Commerce will research competitiveness in other regions in Canada and internationally. The results will form a report with recommendations for action. The Chamber will also meet with the provincial and federal governments to share findings and to develop a framework to improve B.C.'s productivity and global competitiveness.

The Competitiveness BC initiative was born out of recent BC Chamber-facilitated discussions about B.C.'s productivity challenge. These discussions involved Chamber members, business associations, private sector companies, national productivity and competitiveness organizations, as well as both federal and provincial government agencies. These discussions revealed unanimous agreement that the productivity challenges B.C. is facing as an economy are serious and that a co-ordinated effort is required to improve the productivity and competitiveness levels of B.C. businesses.

The BC Chamber is the largest and most broadly-based business organization in the province. Representing more than 125 Chambers of Commerce and 36,000 businesses of every size, sector and region of the province, the BC Chamber of Commerce is "The Voice of Business in BC."

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