



# A Good Jobs Economy in BC

IDEAS FROM THE CCPA-BC'S JOBS CONFERENCE

By Seth Klein

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CCPA  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
BC Office

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Ideas from the CCPA–BC’s Jobs Conference

By Seth Klein  
February 2016

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# Introduction

ON NOVEMBER 21, 2014, the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives hosted a very thoughtful and solutions-oriented conference entitled A Good Jobs Economy in BC.<sup>1</sup> Fifteen papers were presented, and almost all have been posted online at [policyalternatives.ca/goodjobspapers](http://policyalternatives.ca/goodjobspapers). The following summary highlights some of the policy ideas contained in those papers, with more than 50 policy proposals for the creation of good jobs in BC—plenty for any government or party to choose from in the development of a vibrant jobs agenda. If one or more of the papers strikes you as particularly innovative or intriguing, we encourage you to read the full paper.

## Why we convened the conference

Our core hope was that the conference would help to kick-start our efforts to build an alternative economic vision with sustainable good jobs. The context is a *BC Jobs Plan* that simply isn't working.

Our core hope was that the conference would help to kick-start our efforts to build an alternative economic vision with sustainable good jobs. The context is a *BC Jobs Plan* that, as CCPA–BC senior economist Iglia Ivanova has documented, simply isn't working.<sup>2</sup> The provincial government's plan is almost entirely focused on resource extraction, particularly LNG—a risky strategy, as investment decisions are ultimately outside our control. It is a strategy that keeps us riding the traditional BC economy roller-coaster that ties our fate to global commodity prices, which have plunged rapidly over the last year. And it is a strategy that puts us at odds with where we need to go given the climate-change imperative.

But at the same time, progressives have struggled to articulate a compelling, diverse and convincing counter-narrative—a progressive jobs agenda that is ecologically sustainable yet capable of meeting our collective needs for economic security and employment. CCPA–BC's Climate Justice Project has identified many ideas for green jobs, but we've done less well at articulating a more comprehensive alternative jobs agenda. Hence this conference. We issued a call for papers and challenged the authors to focus on solutions rather than merely outline what isn't working or what not to do, which we're good at already.

There were clearly gaps in the conference agenda—important topics and sectors that were not addressed—but it was a start to a conversation that many have long known we need to better engage in and build upon. (For additional innovative ideas, see the list of “Big Ideas” for job creation curated by Iglia Ivanova here: [policynote.ca/how-to-create-good-jobs-in-bc](http://policynote.ca/how-to-create-good-jobs-in-bc).) That said,

1 Special thanks to CCPA project manager Thi Vu for her help organizing the conference and to the conference organizing committee: Iglia Ivanova, Jim Chorostecki, David Fairey, Blair Redlin, Geoff Mann and Jonathan Chapnick. The conference was co-sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour, the Progressive Economics Forum and Simon Fraser University's Centre for Global Political Economy.

2 See <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/bc-jobs-plan-reality-check-first-two-years>.

the conference certainly did help to further populate the discussion about job creation with a host of new and hopeful ideas.

Much of BC's economic strategy in recent years has been trade-focused, dressed up in fancy packages such as "BC as Canada's Gateway to the Asia-Pacific" and "Canada Starts Here" (the tag-line of the BC Jobs Plan). But we rarely pause to ask whether this is really the best to which BC can aspire. Are we to be mere luggage-carriers for raw resources leaving here and so many useless consumer goods coming into Canada? Does this whole approach not lock us into the very low-value economy we have spent decades seeking to escape? To what extent is seeing BC as a "gateway" a fundamental failure of imagination? What might it look like to relocalize more of our economy (something climate change may well demand of us)?

As a public policy institute, CCPA-BC is particularly interested in the role of the state. What can government do either directly to create jobs or to foster job creation in key sectors that are committed to this place?

A few other key questions we sought to address:

1. How can we finance or capitalize our alternative job creation ideas (arguably the elephant in the room)? For example, when we compare the job creation potential of many green industries with those of the fossil fuel sector, it is not hard to demonstrate that most green infrastructure and green tech industries produce more jobs per dollar invested.<sup>3</sup> But the problem is this: there are billions of dollars on the table from fossil fuel companies for their new infrastructure but much less money, so far at least, for the alternatives. So how can we change that? How might we marshal new sources of investment capital?
2. What does a modern industrial policy look like? We're often told such thinking is passé (though less so since the economic crisis of 2008-09<sup>4</sup>). Yet the status quo isn't working. Corporate Canada has had its way on the policy front for decades now; corporate taxes have been dramatically reduced both federally and provincially, with the promise that this would result in more investment and job creation. Yet over half a *trillion* dollars of corporate money is sitting idle—dead money, not being reinvested. How can we legislate some of that capital back to work? What are other countries, like Finland and Denmark and Germany, doing that outperforms us on many measures of economic performance, employment and diversification?
3. How can we ensure training and employment opportunities for traditionally excluded populations?
4. Finally, how do we ensure that our existing jobs, as well as new ones, are in fact *good*—that they pay well, offer benefits, provide the core elements of economic security that most of us need and (dare we even consider) are rewarding and meaningful?

What might it look like to relocalize more of our economy (something climate change may well demand of us)?

No small order. But those are the questions we sought to answer as we set about to discuss what a "good jobs agenda" looks like for BC.

What follows is a summary of what the presenters had to offer.

3 For more on that, see Marc Lee's paper here: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/green-industrial-revolution>.

4 For more on the re-emergence of industrial policy, see: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/on-the-economy-what-next-when-the-election-is-over/article26335844/>.

# A gateway to good jobs? Opening up the conversation<sup>5</sup>

by Peter Hall (Assistant Professor of Geography and Urban Studies, Simon Fraser University)

Even as cargo flowing through the port increased significantly, job growth has been very modest.

THE OPENING PAPER BY PETER HALL offers an important critique of the Asia-Pacific “gateway” frame that has figured as a centrepiece of BC’s economic plans for decades. As he notes right off the top: “Proponents of gateway infrastructure projects tend to over-estimate the economic benefits of their investments, making inflated claims about the number of jobs created through public spending on the infrastructures that support the handling of traded goods, while ignoring those supply chain segments that produce contingent and unstable jobs.”

As a case in point, Hall reviews the data on the number and nature of jobs that port infrastructure has created (focusing on port-related trucking, longshoring, warehousing and freight services industries) and finds that in 2006 between 17,500 and 22,500 jobs in the Greater Vancouver area were directly linked to the maritime trade function of the port. However, even as cargo flowing through the port increased significantly, job growth has been very modest (not at all commensurate with the growth in cargo throughput); many of the jobs are tied to fixed infrastructure that does not grow along with increased throughput, and, in some cases, increased volume has come with technological enhancements that boost productivity but require fewer jobs.

Hall’s goal is to “open up a conversation about what a progressive version of a gateway might entail; what exactly does it mean to have ‘good jobs’ in the gateway transportation industries, how would the industry look different if it were creating good jobs, and how and by whom might such a gateway system be created and governed?”

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5 Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_PeterHall\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_PeterHall_GoodJobsConf.pdf)

# Highlights from the National Good Jobs Summit<sup>6</sup>

A slide presentation by Jim Stanford  
(Economist, Unifor)

**JIM STANFORD JOINED OUR CONFERENCE** having just co-hosted a national Good Jobs Summit the previous month in Toronto (with more than 1,000 in attendance). Stanford demonstrates that the existing national economic strategy is producing neither enough jobs nor good quality jobs. Based on the national employment rate between 2007 and 2014, he calculates that the Canadian economy would need to produce another 725,000 jobs in order to restore the employment rate to where it was before the 2008 recession.

Stanford's presentation outlines some of the common themes to emerge at the summit, as well as some of the more innovative ideas and models discussed. Included among them:

- “Yes We Code”: a US project training thousands of disadvantaged/at-risk youth in computer programming (to explore more, visit: [yeswecode.org](http://yeswecode.org)).
- Community Benefits Agreements: another US-based initiative that sees community groups form binding agreements with real estate developers, requiring specific community amenities from the developers such as special employment and training opportunities for local people, living wage provisions and funds for affordable housing and open spaces.
- Bargaining and representation in precarious jobs: in an economy with an increasing share of temporary and precarious jobs, creative ways of providing these workers with union representation could make these jobs better.

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<sup>6</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Presentation\\_JimStanford\\_GoodJobsSummit.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Presentation_JimStanford_GoodJobsSummit.pdf).

- Living wages: another important means of improving job quality (about which the CCPA has written extensively).
- Strengthening the coverage and enforcement of employment standards.
- Targeted apprenticeship programs that come with a job offer.
- Providing EI benefits while retraining.

For more on the national Good Jobs Summit, see the final report here: [unifor.org/en/take-action/good-jobs-summit/gjs-report](https://unifor.org/en/take-action/good-jobs-summit/gjs-report).



# Green jobs across BC: snapshots of an economy's “green shoots”<sup>7</sup>

by Jonathan Kassian (former Coordinator, Green Jobs BC)

JONATHAN KASSIAN SUMMARIZES KEY POLICY SOLUTIONS that have been advanced by Green Jobs BC as well as ideas and case studies from a 2014 Green Jobs town hall tour of the province. He notes that “The current BC focus on exclusively extracting and exporting raw resources misses the opportunity to create more jobs per dollar [invested] in the long term through community-level initiatives focused on infrastructure, conservation, and sustainable practices.”

Among the ideas and success stories highlighted in Kassian’s report and slides:

- With respect to energy and electricity, BC Hydro’s base of hydroelectric dams provides an excellent foundation for integrating renewables, and “public investments like hydro dam retrofits, municipal initiatives like Kimberley’s Sun Mine [Western Canada’s largest solar farm], or citizen-led initiatives like solar power in the Cowichan Valley are all creating clean energy jobs.”
- An ambitious buildings retrofit program (via direct investments in public buildings, and innovative financing for private homes and buildings, whereby loans for retrofits are carried on property tax or Hydro bills), along with a strengthened building code would reduce GHGs, save consumers money by lowering energy bills, and produce thousands of well-paying jobs.
- A bold investment plan for public transit, which likewise is key to lowering GHGs in the province, would also entail large-scale job creation.

An ambitious buildings retrofit program along with a strengthened building code would reduce GHGs, save consumers money and produce thousands of well-paying jobs.

<sup>7</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_JonathanKassian\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_JonathanKassian_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

The T'Sou-ke First Nation on Vancouver Island is Canada's first aboriginal solar community. While undertaking a massive build of solar panels for the community, they have trained their young people in solar installations.

- Some First Nations have led the way in clean energy and green economic development. For example, the T'Sou-ke First Nation on Vancouver Island is Canada's first aboriginal solar community. While undertaking a massive build of solar panels for the community, they have trained their young people in solar installations (many T'Sou-ke youth are now employed doing solar installations in other communities; indeed, they have become the "go-to workforce for the region's solar projects"). The T'Sou-ke First Nation now produces enough solar electricity to feed power back into the BC Hydro grid at times, as well as powering the community's agriculture, greenhouse and shellfish industries. Similarly, "the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation [in North Vancouver] has a number of proactive economic development initiatives, from wind power to tourism and green buildings."
- Food production and agricultural employment in BC have both fallen in the past two decades. But agriculture should figure centrally in an alternative jobs plan. Increasing the share of food grown within BC (we currently import about half our food) would reduce GHGs and create jobs.<sup>8</sup> This will require protecting BC's farmlands (and implementing other ideas noted by Weiler, Dennis and Wittman; see below).
- Similarly, employment in BC's forestry sector has declined dramatically in recent decades, and our value-added forestry sector has also shrunk. We produce far fewer jobs per volume of wood cut than other Canadian provinces. However, a revived and sustainable forestry sector can and should represent a key part of a green jobs agenda. Kassian notes that "Targeted policies could produce huge job gains in value-added manufacturing (10,000 jobs), tree planting and forest health (5,200 seasonal jobs), wood waste processing (2,400 jobs), and the Forest Service (200 jobs)."<sup>9</sup> More ideas for reviving BC forestry and moving up the value chain were presented in the Hammond paper (see below).
- The clean technology sector—operating in industries such as renewable energy generation and conservation/efficiency; zero-GHG transportation; recycling; resource, water and waste management; etc.—is growing in BC. This sector can further benefit from research partnerships with the university sector and by provincial and municipal policies that aim to support knowledge clusters (more on this in the paper by McFarlane; see below).
- The Columbia Basin Trust recently funded a program to retrofit existing dams in the Kootenays, creating hundreds of jobs.
- Numerous regions have focused on eco-tourism and have also pursued other niche areas (such as culinary tourism in the Okanagan).
- Colleges and universities around the province have developed specializations in sustainable forestry and wood innovation, green buildings, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture.

(Also of note: While not part of our conference, the Pembina Institute has produced a series of interactive provincial maps showing the growth of green jobs throughout BC in the areas of clean energy and green buildings, with others to come. The green buildings map is available here: [pembina.org/pub/bcgreenbuildings](http://pembina.org/pub/bcgreenbuildings).)

8 For more on this, see the CCPA's Climate Justice Project report *Every Bite Counts: Climate Justice and BC's Food System*: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/everybitecounts>.

9 For more on future forestry employment in a climate-changing world, see Ben Parfitt's CCPA Climate Justice Project report *Making the Case for a Carbon Focus and Green Jobs in BC's Forest Industry*: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/greenforests>.

# The power of local purchasing<sup>10</sup>

by Charley Beresford (Executive Director, Columbia Institute)

CHARLEY BERESFORD'S PAPER SUMMARIZES IDEAS from the Columbia Institute's recent reports on the job creation benefits of local procurement. Simply put, when local governments and businesses prioritize purchasing supplies and products from BC-based businesses, more money circulates within the province and more jobs are created. This also holds true for major capital purchases. Of course, buying local also represents an effort to resist the imperative of globalized trade, thus countering the movement of production and pollution to where wages are lowest and regulations the meekest.

A case study presented by Beresford is that of made-in-BC ferries. She outlines the many benefits of local ship procurement, drawing on a recent Columbia Institute (CI) report by Blair Redlin and David Fairey.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the Canadian government and that of Washington State, the BC government has sent some recent shipbuilding contracts overseas. The CI report estimates that, by awarding a contract for three intermediate ferries to a shipyard in Poland, BC relinquished more than 1,000 direct jobs per year for three years as well as the indirect jobs that would have been generated by that local spending. The good news is that BC Ferries will still need more than 20 replacement ships in the coming years, providing ample opportunity for local employment and enhancing domestic shipbuilding capacity.

Beresford also presents economic models outlining the economic and employment benefits of local purchasing by major institutions and businesses. For example, purchasing office supplies from a local company such as Mills Basics leads to a 33 per cent recirculation of revenues, compared to 16.6 to 18.7 per cent for purchases from its major multinational counterparts.

Beresford also offers an important warning regarding how local procurement could be stymied if Canada proceeds with the CETA trade and investment agreement with the European Union.

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<sup>10</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_CharleyBeresford\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_CharleyBeresford_GoodJobsConf.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See: <http://www.civicgovernance.ca/made-in-bc-ferries/>.

# Creating the creative economy: a better idea for BC's economic future<sup>12</sup>

by Matt Toner (President, Zeros 2 Heroes Media)

An estimated 18,000 people in BC are employed in the “creative” sector—more than forestry, mining, or oil and gas. And while the sector includes some who are struggling at low pay, many of the jobs are in fact “good” and “clean.”

MATT TONER BROUGHT CONCRETE BUSINESS EXPERIENCE to our conference as founder of a local tech company, Zeros 2 Heroes Media, which incubates new internet start-ups. Toner has spent time contemplating what these companies need and what it would take to keep them here.

Toner notes that an estimated 18,000 people in BC are employed in the “creative” sector—more than forestry, mining, or oil and gas. And while the sector includes some who are struggling at low pay, many of the jobs are in fact “good” and “clean”—jobs we would be happy to see our children and grandchildren land. He defines the creative economy as “those industries that drive growth through the application of knowledge and creativity to produce innovative new products or services.” The sector encompasses fields such as advertising and marketing, broadcasting, film, internet, music, publishing and computer games.

Currently, the sector has sought to capitalize on Canada's lower dollar, tax credits and immigration laws that are somewhat looser than those of the US (which has meant that tech talent from Asia has often come to BC either instead of or en route to the US).

But Toner cautions that our tech sector is in danger of becoming little more than a digital “branch-plant economy” (recalling warnings from Canadian economic nationalists in the 1960s). Vancouver, for example, has landed some big new investments from tech giants like Microsoft and Amazon, but Toner warns that these major players could crowd out local innovation companies (which struggle to find talent and financing) and may serve mainly as migration way stations for high-tech immigrants from Asia en route to the US. And, as with the branch plants of old, research and development remain concentrated at headquarters.

In place of this model, Toner writes, “To chart a better course, we must learn from the experience of other innovation-based tech centres, including the relatively small Finnish economy. There, the

<sup>12</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_MattToner\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_MattToner_GoodJobsConf.pdf)

government has carved out a series of public-private mechanisms that have created a range of globally competitive technology companies to anchor their innovation industry and economy at large. It is time to re-examine the potential role Crown partners can play in creating a made-in-BC-for-BC industrial strategy, one that favours the development of local innovative companies.”

Toner notes that core companies are needed to serve as anchors or “tentpoles” for larger creative/tech clusters. For example, Entertainment Arts in Vancouver has recruited and trained talent that has spun off and started new gaming companies. Labour tax credits (such as exist in the film sector) could be used to kick-start these clusters, and government grants could help attract anchor companies.

But, Toner warns, “...a creative economy is a much more fickle creature [than traditional resource industries]: it needs tending, fine-tuning and rapid footwork to keep pace with dynamic global forces.” Moreover, there is always the “flight” danger—namely, that success for many of these tech companies comes when they are bought out by larger foreign companies (such as when Vancouver start-up Flickr was purchased by Yahoo! and moved to San Francisco).

This leads Toner to the Finnish model to foster creative companies and keep them here:

*“...Finland has opted for direct up-front investments [in] new intellectual properties wholly-owned by Finnish companies. This approach has been underpinned by a government controlled investment fund known as Tekes, the Finnish funding agency for investment. Of the 600 million euros invested annually, Tekes sets aside 70 million euros for the computer games industry: over the years, it has invested in more than 100 Finnish games companies through either loans or direct investments. ...Tekes makes rather large investments in these new companies, which gives them the capital needed to succeed on the world stage. Up to 1 million [euros] are made available per project as either investments or loans; companies can apply for several projects to make up a slate that can amortize technology and talent in the most efficient ways. The model is dynamic and flexible, allowing companies to come forward with project proposals at any time.”*

Despite a similar population size, BC has nothing comparable. The provincial agency Creative BC has a budget of a mere \$2.2 million.<sup>13</sup> Toner proposes that a more ambitious Crown investment agency, modelled on Tekes, could serve a similar role here:

- A new Crown agency could make direct investments in new innovation companies and leverage additional support from “angel” investors and the federal government. As a major co-owner of these companies, the public can make such support conditional on the companies remaining in BC.
- We need an associated strategy to recruit, retain and retrain local tech talent. Such a strategy is particularly important when some firms shut down or relocate; if we are not to lose valuable talent in those moments, an agency and a strategy are needed to help keep these people in BC.

Toner acknowledges that the benefits of such a strategy would accrue mainly to Vancouver (and to a lesser extent Victoria and Kelowna), but that doesn’t mean such ideas shouldn’t form a piece of an overall provincial jobs agenda.

We need an associated strategy to recruit, retain and retrain local tech talent. Such a strategy is particularly important when some firms shut down or relocate.

<sup>13</sup> In January 2016, the BC government announced a new \$100 million tech venture capital fund. Some of this could be used to support the creative sector, but how it will function remains unclear. The amount is a one-time expenditure, which still makes it small relative to the annual funding under the Finnish model.

# A pivot to manufacturing jobs in BC: imagining what it would take<sup>14</sup>

by Ken J. McFarlane

The data available to governments today make it easier to better identify sectors worthy of support.

KEN MCFARLANE ALSO BROUGHT YEARS OF BUSINESS EXPERIENCE to the conference, having established a number of advanced manufacturing ventures. The fact that he felt compelled to start these companies mostly in other countries (rather than his home province of BC) has given him ample time to reflect on what could have enticed him and his partners to invest here.

McFarlane's paper posits that we cannot build a vibrant advanced manufacturing sector (nor create the well-paying, "clean" and stable jobs associated with it) by adhering to free market principles; instead, he writes, "Government must reassert itself through the development of smart policies" and the revival of vigorous industrial policy. McFarlane warns that the typical approach of seeking to attract investment through tax cuts and deregulation merely encourages a race to the bottom. Instead, he proposes a model based on purpose-built infrastructure, targeted education/training programs, nuanced research and development and "aggressive technology transfer arrangements" focused on carefully selected product clusters. He rejects the notion that governments can't pick "winners" and argues that the data available to governments today make it easier to better identify sectors worthy of support.

McFarlane is drawn to the ideas of Mariana Mazzucato and her book *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths*,<sup>15</sup> which highlights the key role of government and public universities in driving such innovations as the internet, biotechnology, breakthrough pharmaceuticals, the iPhone, nano-technology and renewable energy. In most of these examples, Mazzucato finds that the public has borne (socialized) much of the risk while private interests have realized the profits. Clearly, the state needs to gain more from its stake and achieve a better return on our collective investment.

<sup>14</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_MattToner\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_MattToner_GoodJobsConf.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See: <http://marianamazzucato.com/the-entrepreneurial-state/>.

Among the policy ideas in McFarlane's paper:

- Use a public development bank that directly invests in new enterprises, particularly “early stage ventures” that normally have difficulty finding financing due to risk-averse private lenders. Alternatively, such a public bank can offer “income-contingent” loans to these ventures.
- Government should expect and receive “healthy royalties” from applied technology breakthroughs, and money from these returns can be reinvested in “innovation funds.”
- Government should choose its partners well, seeking out entrepreneurs “infused with values and aspirations that might well make for healthier public-private relationships.” In other words, support should go towards those businesses that embrace social and environmental responsibility and are more open to “giving back” and sharing their success with their workers. Government should signal its interest in such ventures as a means of drawing out those entrepreneurs who share such an orientation. And that signal matters: “Historically, entrepreneurs, investors and owners have sooner or later adapted to circumstances around them, regardless of how much they initially protested or resisted doing so. Give them a plan—even an industrial strategy—and they will find a way to thrive within it.”

Like Toner, McFarlane is interested in how governments can support the establishment of “clusters” (though in this case ones focused on advanced manufacturing). But unlike the tech sector described by Toner, which is notoriously footloose and able to relocate with relative ease, a company that invests in a manufacturing plant is much more likely to stay put. His proposals for identifying and fostering sector candidates for such clusters include:

- Our research institutions need resources to carve out certain areas of “world class” expertise. But much better follow-through is needed, or homegrown innovations will end up leaving the province (as has often occurred in the past).
- “Unlike 30 years ago, governments now have access to at least as good information as private entrepreneurs and business innovators in terms of the relevant economic, social, demographic and geo-political factors that go into the forecasting models concerning consumer preferences, product life-cycles, community/industrial infrastructure requirements and global competition.” Such data can be used to help determine which sectors are best suited for investment, support, local specialization and cluster-formation.
- Focus on typical household “needs” rather than “wants”—while less “sexy,” focusing on what people actually use and can afford can make for a compelling industrial strategy and may find a consumer base that is keen to “buy local” and support local employment. Local manufacturing of this sort also leads to related local business opportunities to create components and to service these products.
- A future-oriented government should be focusing on what opportunities will come with the advent of 3-D printing, nano-technology and biotech. And if a government can give companies that seek to adopt these technologies room to fail (perhaps sharing some of the risk), we are more likely to find ourselves home to factories for those efforts that succeed.
- There is a core need for government planning, particularly in the form of identifying the cross-cutting challenges and needs these manufacturing firms will face: infrastructure needs, human resources and skill needs, technology priorities and other resource needs (and undertaking such planning would also provide jobs).

Unlike the tech sector, a company that invests in a manufacturing plant is much more likely to stay put.

- However, state support can and should come with a clear quid pro quo; companies that benefit from government investment and infrastructure should expect to pay reasonable taxes and royalties, and such support should be linked to the achievement of collective economic, social and environmental objectives, such as demonstrable job creation and the provision of higher wages.
- As others propose, government procurement contracts must be strategically employed to encourage local manufacturing.

A few key new Crown corporations would allow for better long-term planning, would ensure the downstream benefits of risk-taking investments return to the public, and could anchor new clusters of private firms.

McFarlane warns, however, that BC may well lack the necessary pool of companies, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs willing and able to foster an advanced manufacturing sector as envisioned. Given that, he proposes we consider creating a new Crown corporation (or even multiple new public enterprises) to help lead this endeavour. “Public enterprises are the most reliable means to ensure that manufacturing operations remain in the province once they are established and that corporate earnings are used for human resource development and local public services rather than primarily for the enrichment of private owners.” A few key new Crown corporations would allow for better long-term planning, would ensure the downstream benefits of risk-taking investments return to the public, and could anchor new clusters of private firms.

McFarlane concludes with a review of how many of these ideas are being successfully practised around the world.



# How government support for social enterprise can reduce poverty and green house gases<sup>16</sup>

by Lynne Fernandez (Researcher, Errol Black Chair in Labour Studies, CCPA–Manitoba)

LYNNE FERNANDEZ FROM THE CCPA'S MANITOBA OFFICE came to the conference to share a very innovative and exciting model from her province. The model sees Crown corporations (Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Housing) partnering with social enterprises to create jobs and train at-risk people (particularly aboriginal youth) in various trades, while also meeting environmental and social policy objectives.

In one example, Manitoba Hydro has partnered with an aboriginal-owned social enterprise called Aki Energy. Aki Energy installs geothermal heating and cooling systems into homes in northern First Nations communities. They have trained young aboriginal people in geothermal installation, providing them with a highly portable and in-demand skill. Once a First Nations home has geothermal, its monthly electricity bills go down dramatically (given Manitoba's cold winters), thereby reducing a major cost for these largely low-income households and alleviating energy poverty. The cost of the installation is carried on the home's Manitoba Hydro bill until the loan is paid off (a financing model called "pay as you save"), putting it within reach of First Nations families that otherwise could not afford the upfront costs of the installation. The initiative is lowering the power demands on Manitoba Hydro and, in some cases, displacing GHGs if the previous heating source was oil or gas. Fernandez notes that renewable energy industries such as geothermal tend to create more jobs than fossil fuel industries.

Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Housing have partnered with social enterprises to create jobs and train at risk people (particularly aboriginal youth) in various trades, while also meeting environmental and social policy objectives.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/CCPA-BC-Good-Jobs-Fernandez-Social-Ent-GHG.pdf>.

A second example involves a social enterprise called BUILD (Building Urban Industry for Local Development), which trains multi-barriered (mostly aboriginal) young people in building trades. Then, in partnership with Manitoba Housing, these youth put their new skills into practice doing retrofits in social housing units. Again, low-income tenants benefit from lower utility bills, the Crown too can save money on heating, GHGs are displaced and at-risk youth gain valuable new skills.

This is a model that sees social enterprise and the public sector not as competitors but as complementary to and supportive of each other's mandates. BC has Crown corporations that could well replicate elements of this Manitoba model. We have ample untapped geothermal resources. We have First Nations communities eager to get off diesel fuel. We have social housing units that need energy efficiency retrofits. And we have multi-barriered youth who need training for the climate-oriented jobs of the future.

If Crown corporations and communities are required to lower their emissions, and building codes are strengthened, then a vibrant market is created for innovative social enterprises.

Specific policies Fernandez recommends to advance such models include:

- Establishing “neighbourhood renewal corporations” to work with social enterprises and help connect their programs to low-income residents in need of housing and energy retrofits.
- Passing legislation to encourage or require energy conservation and use of renewable energy to help drive these partnerships. If Crown corporations and communities are required to lower their emissions, and building codes are strengthened, then a vibrant market is created for innovative social enterprises such as those described. Crown corporations can also be specifically mandated to fund and undertake the kinds of initiatives described.
- Developing a social enterprise strategy, with the goal of recognizing and supporting the role of social enterprise in job training and employment for at-risk populations.

# Building good jobs, cooperatively<sup>17</sup>

by Kevin Harding (Director of Co-op Development,  
BC Co-operative Association)

KEVIN HARDING'S PAPER OFFERS A HISTORY of co-operatives (internationally and in Canada), explains their numerous forms and outlines their many benefits. He argues this is a sector that is more likely to produce "good" jobs for a number of reasons—co-operatives are not driven by a profit-seeking imperative but can prioritize social, community and environmental goals as well as high-quality service levels; the jobs they produce tend to be less precarious, more rewarding, more participatory and more likely to offer living wages; and co-ops often respond to economic crises differently, making greater efforts to sustain jobs during challenging times than private profit-seeking enterprises (for example, in Italy during the 2008–09 economic crisis, not a single co-op closed, despite their prominence in the Emilia-Romagna region).

The latter half of Harding's paper explores how BC could foster the expansion of the co-op sector. He notes that, even though BC is home to English Canada's largest credit union (Vancity) and the largest consumer co-op (Mountain Equipment Co-op), the co-op sector in BC is substantially smaller than in many other provinces (for example, while there are approximately 400 non-credit union and non-housing co-ops in BC, there are more than 2,300 in Quebec and about 1,700 in Saskatchewan). To change this, and create good jobs in the process, Harding suggests the following:

- Improve co-op access to financing by establishing community development investment funds that extend capital to co-ops. Such community development funds can serve as a vehicle for people to redirect their RRSP savings and other investments towards the co-op sector (Nova Scotia offers a useful model for this, where the government has actively sought to mobilize 5 per cent of RRSP savings in the province towards community investments). Another option would be to encourage union pension plans to invest a share of their investments towards this purpose.

Co-operatives are not driven by a profit-seeking imperative but can prioritize social, community and environmental goals as well as high-quality service levels.

17 Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_KevinHarding\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_KevinHarding_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

- Loosen some of the regulatory requirements for co-ops that seek access to investment capital (such as those just mentioned). Smaller co-ops needing financing simply may not be in a position to undertake all the complicated filing normally needed when seeking outside investment, or their differing organizational structure may make them a poor fit for such filing (a round peg in a square hole).
- Government could consider tax benefits for worker-owned co-ops.
- Finally, government should undertake an active campaign to raise public awareness about the benefits of co-ops and urge consumers to support such enterprises. Business schools could also do more to present co-ops as a worthy model for the consideration of their students.

# Sixteen building blocks for a green, entrepreneurial, cooperative economy<sup>18</sup>

by Guy Dauncey (environmental author and futurist)

LIKE HARDING, GUY DAUNCEY IS KEEN to see BC's co-op sector greatly expanded, as he believes that the profit-seeking corporate sector has too much influence in our society, is too keen to avoid paying taxes, and has been revealed as unwilling and unable to adjust to the reality of the climate imperative. Dauncey is particularly interested in the encouragement of green co-ops that use 100 per cent renewable energy. Among the ideas he presents are:

- Foster the creation of “village business networks.” Dauncey is inspired by the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy (which is dominated by co-ops) and would like to see BC import some of its lessons. (As an aside, Vancity credit union has long shared this goal and over the years has taken dozens of prominent British Columbians to tour the Emilia-Romagna region and meet with its leaders.) Dauncey notes that key to the model is co-ops supporting each other through a local network.
- Require that businesses pay a small tax (or levy) into a co-op development fund.
- Establish strong public supports for the co-op sector. Dauncey looks at the success of co-op development agencies in the UK and the US, which have actively assisted in the establishment of new co-ops, and recommends we do likewise.

In the slides that accompany his paper, Dauncey zeroes in on one of his proposals, highlighting the many benefits of a public bank (or a network of municipal public banks, such as exists in Germany). Such a bank likely would not engage in retail banking in the same manner as a regular bank or credit union (though it could) but would instead focus on business development/investments and other policy goals. He notes that public banks are common throughout the world. Among their benefits:

Dauncey is inspired by the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy (which is dominated by co-ops) and would like to see BC import some of its lessons.

<sup>18</sup> Available at: [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_GuyDauncey\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_GuyDauncey_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

A public bank would be able to offer financing for provincial and municipal infrastructure projects, significantly lowering their interest costs.

- When a public bank creates money (via the provision of credit), the interest earned is returned to the public rather than to shareholders.
- The public Bank of North Dakota has a loan portfolio of \$2.6 billion, has allowed the state to be debt-free and is credited with helping North Dakota maintain the lowest unemployment rate in the US.
- A public bank can support (with low-interest loans) community banking, community development funds, First Nations business development initiatives, social enterprises, community forestry initiatives, co-op start-ups, 100 per cent renewable energy projects, local farms, home and building energy retrofits, and various other initiatives related to climate action.
- A public bank could give low-interest or even interest-free loans to students.
- A public bank would be able to offer financing for provincial and municipal infrastructure projects, significantly lowering their interest costs.<sup>19</sup>
- A public bank could issue low-interest loans to the kinds of sector clusters described in the Toner and McFarlane papers above.

A new BC public bank could be capitalized from the reserves of BC's Crown corporations and, once established, could quickly set to work undertaking the ideas above.

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<sup>19</sup> The new federal government may advance an idea like this. During the 2015 election campaign, the federal Liberals proposed a Canada Infrastructure Bank: <https://www.liberal.ca/realchange/financing-infrastructure-investments-with-the-canada-infrastructure-bank/?shownew=1>.

# Growing good agricultural jobs in BC<sup>20</sup>

by Anelyse M. Weiler, University of Toronto and Global Labour Research Centre, York University; Jessica E. Dennis and Hannah Wittman, UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems

THE PAPER BY WEILER, DENNIS AND WITTMAN outlines how to improve both the *quality* and *quantity* of agricultural jobs in BC. They note (as Kassian does above) the value of strengthening BC's domestic food-growing sector and argue that, given climate change (and droughts in California in particular), boosting our local capacity can help insulate us from supply disruptions and price hikes. Over half of BC's farmers are currently over age 55, but new farmers face significant barriers to entry, and current farm incomes hardly make the idea of farming attractive. The authors contend, however, that "there is nothing inevitable about policies that create widespread precariousness and lack of economic viability in farm employment. On the contrary, promoting good agricultural jobs in BC is an opportunity to revive community-driven economies in rural areas, contend with structural inequalities for low-income newcomers and migrants, and address youth unemployment."

With respect to job quality, the paper addresses the urgent need to strengthen employment standards and improve wages of farm workers (including ending the piece-rate wages for hand harvesters), most of whom are migrants and immigrants and thus particularly vulnerable.

With respect to creating new agricultural jobs, the paper offers ideas for how to help more young farmers who want to start out in this sector and how to ensure their incomes are viable and stable. There is, in fact, a resurgence of interest in farming as a career among young people in BC (the paper contains survey results documenting this trend). But these potential new entrants lack access to land, financing and a stable market. Among the policy measures the authors recommend:

- Curbing non-farm use and land speculation in the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- Supporting "municipal incubator farms" on public lands.

There is a resurgence of interest in farming as a career among young people in BC.

<sup>20</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_WeilerDennisWittman\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_WeilerDennisWittman_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

- Requiring that large public institutions (such as schools and hospitals) use their procurement policies (as other authors have suggested) to purchase from BC farms with demonstrated fair labour practices.
- Encouraging alternative forms of land ownership: co-op farms, farmland trusts, farming on public land and informal land-sharing models.

The ideas outlined by Harding and Dauncey above could also help with financing for new farmers.



# Good jobs require healthy ecosystems and healthy communities<sup>21</sup>

by Herb Hammond (forest ecologist)

HERB HAMMOND IS SOMETHING OF A LEGEND in the field of ecologically sustainable forestry in BC. The first half of his paper explains why our economy needs to be rooted in a healthy ecosystem—“recognizing that all parts of Earth are interconnected and interdependent.” Hammond outlines what he means by an ecosystem-centred economy, and he argues that building such an economy can produce jobs that are more meaningful and rewarding. (He also offers some compelling definitions of what is meant by a “meaningful” job.)

In the second half of his paper, Hammond lists a wide range of concrete policy ideas that would move BC’s forestry sector up the value chain, produce more jobs and result in jobs that are more enduring and environmentally sustainable. He envisions jobs that are based upon “ecosystem-based conservation planning.” Within this frame, a number of employment opportunities emerge. Among his proposals:

- We need many new jobs in ecological restoration and planning (both rural and urban). These are jobs that “[assist] natural processes to mend, replace, and develop natural composition, structure, and function.” This would have implications for municipal infrastructure needs (and could displace some of the traditional infrastructure deficit). For example, many of our existing storm sewer systems are deteriorating and will be unable to handle the weather events coming with climate change. “However, restoring natural ecosystem integrity in as many places as possible throughout an urban watershed may not only be cheaper than upgrading storm sewers, but restored natural forest ecosystems accompanied by changes to water impermeable surfaces [e.g., replacing paved areas with permeable natural covering] may provide the relief necessary for cities to handle intense storm events.”

We need many new jobs in ecological restoration and planning (both rural and urban).

21 Available at: [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_HerbHammond\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_HerbHammond_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

- Ecological restoration can be funded by municipal and provincial governments on public lands. On private lands, it could be supported by offering property tax benefits for homes and buildings that undertake ecological restoration on their land (thereby reducing demand on municipal infrastructure).
- As intact forest ecosystems also help with climate mitigation and adaptation, supporting jobs in forest ecology restoration similarly makes good economic sense. Hammond recommends a stumpage surcharge and restoration levy to fund such forest restoration work, and he also believes that a share of future carbon tax money should be directed towards this purpose.

Like Kassian, Hammond laments how few jobs BC produces per unit of wood we cut, compared to other provinces (in 2014, BC produced 0.85 jobs per thousand cubic metres of timber cut and processed, compared to 3.47 in Ontario and 2.44 in Quebec). To shift this reality, Hammond recommends:

As intact forest ecosystems also help with climate mitigation and adaptation, supporting jobs in forest ecology restoration makes good economic sense.

- Replacing clear-cut logging with partial-cut selective logging, which employs more people and is more protective of ecosystems. Particularly “light touch” logging should be granted stumpage credits.
- Shifting forest tenure from large companies with no demonstrated interest in investing in higher-value manufacturing to small and mid-sized value-added manufacturers (who currently lack timber supply).
- Implementing legislation, regulations and policies that require at least secondary manufacturing in a local community for timber cut near the community.
- Implementing a “transportation tax” on logs and basic commodity lumber that leave a local area without further processing, and directing the money raised to forestry restoration and local ecosystem planning.
- Transferring more forest tenure to Community Forest Agreements, until such community tenures grow to at least 50 per cent of the volume cut in the province, and requiring that such tenures come with ecosystem-based conservation plans, including value-added manufacturing.

# How public sector jobs can foster community economies<sup>22</sup>

by Janet Newbury (Assistant Professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria)

JANET NEWBURY REVIEWS THE MYRIAD WAYS in which public services are vital to our quality of life and equality. She argues that enhanced public services would not only lead to more public sector jobs, but also facilitate community economic development in the private and non-profit sectors as well (particularly during economic downturns). She notes that government spending cuts are empirically linked to poorer economic performance, while increased public spending (particularly on programs that reduce inequality) is associated with enhanced economic performance (for example, look at the contrasting experiences of Greece and Iceland in the wake of the 2008–09 economic crisis).

Newbury contends that community economies are more than what the private sector does:

*“A community economy approach makes explicit the fact that capitalist market activity is one part of economic life, but does not encompass its entirety. Other means of production and distribution of goods and services (such as volunteer efforts, producing food, caring for children and the elderly, bartering, and more) are not only important to include in our understanding of what comprises the economy, but also crucial in that without these activities the formal market economy would collapse.”*

Drawing on the CCPA’s work, Newbury notes that BC has the smallest public sector in Canada.<sup>23</sup> This is not a strength; rather, it has served to hold the province back economically (undermining important services that are core to our quality of life, eroding the number of non-precarious jobs and undercutting the ability of public sector jobs to stimulate local economies). Public sector jobs

Government spending cuts are empirically linked to poorer economic performance, while increased public spending (particularly on programs that reduce inequality) is associated with enhanced economic performance.

22 Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper\\_JanetNewbury\\_GoodJobsConf.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/WorkingPaper_JanetNewbury_GoodJobsConf.pdf).

23 See: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/bc-public-sector-reality-check>

are particularly important in resource-dependent communities, where the public sector is often the largest or second-largest employer. When primary resource sectors experience downturns due to commodity prices declines, these public sector jobs serve as a lifeline for many rural communities.

Give this, Newbury makes the simple but compelling argument that, if we wish to boost employment and community economic development, the provincial government needs to raise more revenues via progressive taxation and spend that new income on enhanced public services.

# \$10 a day child care advances good jobs economy for BC

by Lynell Anderson (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC)

UNFORTUNATELY, LYNELL ANDERSON'S PRESENTATION to our conference is not available for download. But she made a strong case for why a universal \$10 per day child-care plan not only represents a desperately needed new public program but would also represent a vital boost to the economy and substantially enhance employment.

Many of the arguments Anderson made can be found in a factsheet produced by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.<sup>24</sup> And similar points are made in Iglia Ivanova's excellent 2015 CCPA report *Solving BC's Affordability Crisis in Child Care: Financing the \$10 a Day Plan*.<sup>25</sup> Ivanova's report also outlines a detailed and realizable implementation plan for the program.

As Anderson explained, not only would the \$10 plan lead to many more jobs with better pay for child-care providers (and in a low-GHG service sector), it would also result in a significant boost in women's labour force participation (Ivanova calculates that mothers' employment rate would rise by more than 9 percentage points). And it would result in numerous benefits to employers, from reduced staff turnover to improved work/life balance, and would reduce affordability challenges for their employees. Finally, of course, the \$10 plan is central to improving early childhood development, with long-term benefits to the economy as a whole.

Not only would the \$10 plan lead to many more jobs with better pay for child-care providers (and in a low-GHG service sector), it would also result in a significant boost in women's labour force participation.

24 Available here: <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/10-a-day-plan-material/>.

25 Available here: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/solving-bc%E2%80%99s-affordability-crisis-child-care>.

# The role of BC's public service in a good jobs economy: the case of environmental and natural resource management

by Megan Scott (Researcher, BC Government and Service Employees' Union)

The public sector could contribute new "good green jobs in communities across the province."

MEGAN SCOTT'S PAPER IS ALSO not available for download. Her presentation relates to the earlier paper by Hammond, outlining the necessary role of BC public servants in managing, protecting and restoring BC's vast publicly owned land base and overseeing the sustainable development of BC's resource sectors—all work that is becoming even more important and complicated in the era of climate change.

Despite the importance of this sector of the public service, its ranks have been greatly eroded in recent years (along with budget cuts and the weakening of environmental laws and regulations). Between January 2000 and January 2014, the province's "dirt ministries" (as they are sometimes called) cut nearly 2,000 staff, a reduction of 28 per cent. Indeed, with 33 per cent fewer scientific and technical officers and 20 per cent fewer professionals such as foresters, agrologists, geologists and biologists, it's difficult to see how the public sector in this state can undertake the kinds of ecosystem planning envisioned by Hammond, and Scott points to not only growing evidence of corporate non-compliance with existing environmental regulations but also a much reduced capacity to access cumulative environmental impacts.

Were this staffing trend to reverse, however, this sector could contribute new "good green jobs in communities across the province." Scott is particularly keen to see improvements in the areas of information gathering and knowledge generation so that our natural resources and protected

areas can be better managed based on solid data. “At a minimum, restoring spending on natural resources and the environment to 2000 levels would require a \$105 million investment.” But if we were seeking to spend in accordance with population growth and the need to address the impacts of climate change, the investment would need to be substantially larger.

# A progressive sustainable jobs agenda for British Columbia: the role of BC's crown corporations<sup>26</sup>

by Iain W. Reeve and Marvin Shaffer

Our Crown corporations should be helping to both create new jobs and extend new opportunities for traditionally disadvantaged groups.

IN THIS PAPER, Iain Reeve (researcher with the union Move UPI, which represents many workers at BC's largest Crown corporations) and Marvin Shaffer (a noted economist in the field of government capital projects) argue that our Crown corporations should be helping to both create new jobs and extend new opportunities for traditionally disadvantaged groups.

Given that the Crowns are able to embrace social goals and not merely profitability, they should, in a co-ordinated way, emphasize training and employment for those who are underrepresented in the workforce: youth, aboriginal people, women, recent immigrants and racialized people.

While earlier papers such as those by Toner and McFarlane contemplate the creation of new Crown corporations, Reeve and Shaffer focus on what can be done within four of BC's largest established Crown corporations: BC Hydro, ICBC, BC Lottery Corporation, and BC Pavilion Corporation. They note that the major Crowns are significant players in the labour market, not only as large employers but also as major investors (many have large investment funds, which they should use to boost the BC economy and job creation) and via their pricing (for example, BC Hydro and ICBC rates can have a significant impact on the investment and hiring decisions of other companies).

Reeve and Shaffer lament, however, that the provincial government has rarely chosen to utilize our Crown corporations to maximum effect. "Not only is there no overriding strategy in BC on how best to use Crown resources to positively impact the labour market, most individual Crowns are limited and inconsistent in their approach" — a major missed opportunity.

<sup>26</sup> Available at [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/GoodJobsConf\\_ReevesShaffer\\_CrownCorpsAndJobs.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/GoodJobsConf_ReevesShaffer_CrownCorpsAndJobs.pdf)



# Conclusion

THE PRECEDING REPRESENTS A WIDE-RANGING and, I believe, exciting collection of ideas for generating good and sustainable jobs.

Of course, the question raised by many of these proposals is: where would the money come from to implement these ideas?

First, in some cases, initiatives such as these will, over time, pay for themselves. When more people are working and earning a good income, government will see a boost in tax revenues, making these investments well worth undertaking.

Second, the CCPA has proposed many policy ideas for raising new and needed revenues. Many of these can be found in my paper with Iglia Ivanova, *Progressive Tax Options for BC: Reform Ideas for Raising New Revenues and Enhancing Fairness*.<sup>27</sup>

Third, the idea of a public investment bank is noteworthy, as it represents a vehicle for financing many of the other ideas proposed in this summary paper.

Most importantly, many of these ideas constitute elements of what should be an ambitious social and green infrastructure investment plan (for example, a bold public transit or building retrofit plan, as well as capitalizing a public investment bank or an innovation fund). And, as with financing traditional infrastructure, it makes sense for government to borrow money and debt-finance such spending, amortizing the cost over time. Even if the BC government merely maintained its current capital spending as a share of GDP, billions of dollars in coming years would be available to undertake the ideas proposed above. Moreover, the BC government has already indicated it is prepared to spend \$12.5 billion on the Site C dam and the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project combined—both questionable and controversial public investment choices—which is a clear indication that governments can undertake capital expenditures of such magnitude within a manageable fiscal framework. If the BC government made wiser choices about its capital spending, billions more dollars would be freed up—money that could be put to much better use implementing the ideas outlined in this paper.

All of which is to say: there is nothing keeping us from implementing many of the ideas outlined above—the options are many. We just need a government prepared to be ambitious.

Many of these ideas constitute elements of what should be an ambitious social and green infrastructure investment plan.

<sup>27</sup> Available at <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/bc-tax-options>.







**CCPA**

CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
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The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic and environmental justice. Founded in 1980, it is one of Canada's leading progressive voices in public policy debates.

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