



The Cariboo region is highly dependent on the natural resource sector. Traditionally, the forest industry has dominated; however, other industries include mining, agriculture, and tourism. The region's economy and its communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, face significant economic challenges. This can be largely attributed to two factors:

- **The Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) infestation, which has destroyed millions of trees.** The projected Allowable Annual Cuts (AACs) for the Timber Supply Areas in the Cariboo region are 77-86 per cent below the recent 'salvage AAC'. They are also well below the pre-MPB AAC. Unlike a market-driven forestry downturn, which typically lasts 3-5 years, this climate-driven downturn will last 50-70 years — the time it takes for the forests to regrow. This is more than a working lifetime. While the forest industry in BC will continue to be strong and vibrant, it will be smaller, with lower production and fewer jobs.
- **Continued volatility in the global market for natural resources.** Demand and price volatility in the natural resource sector are not new, but the global economic cycles are getting shorter and the downward trend has become more pronounced. Mining and forestry will remain vulnerable as exports from low-cost competitive regions increase and companies shift their investments to these regions.

If nothing is done, these factors will impact the community and individual level. Jobs will disappear, people will leave, and communities will struggle. In this process families will be disrupted; stores, restaurants, and services will close; public services will be downsized or withdrawn; and the real estate market will collapse. Northern BC has seen decline before, but nothing of the scale anticipated with this current economic challenge.

Governance in the region is also complex and shifting and includes six local governments, 12 electoral areas, and 15 First Nations, including the Tsilhqot'in Nation. The recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Tsilhqot'in Nation vs. BC case recognizes a broader definition of First Nations rights and title. This has created certainty and uncertainty, and opportunity and challenge, particularly as it relates to land use planning and decision making.

Doing What Needs to be Done: Economic and Community Transition

The Formation of Cariboo Strong

Communities in the Cariboo need to be supported to develop and implement transition plans that focus on diversifying the economy and strengthening the communities. The Cariboo Regional District, the District of 100 Mile House, the City of Williams Lake, the City of Quesnel, the District of Wells, the Village of Clinton, the

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Thompson-Nicola Regional District and the Community Development Institute (CDI) at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) have developed a partnership to take action. Hence, the Cariboo Strong project has been formed. The action plan calls for developing short- and long-term transition plans for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban and rural communities in the Cariboo region.

Since the MPB epidemic began, various groups and organizations have worked to create plans to deal with the anticipated economic transformation in the region. The Cariboo Strong project will use these plans as a basis for action, assessing the strategies and adjusting them as required ensuring that they are relevant for the current and future economic reality. Our focus will not be on developing strategies, but on community- and business-lead implementation and action leading to economic diversity, growth, and jobs.

The action plan consists of two phases:

Phase One: Moving on Short-Term Job and Business Opportunities (2016-2018)

This phase will focus on the development of short-term economic opportunities, with an emphasis on immediate implementation. The goal is to maintain and create new jobs and business opportunities that will keep people in the communities and the region. The Cariboo Strong team will work closely with First Nations, businesses, and community leaders to identify and implement strategies that can produce results within three years. Phase One will be implemented beginning September 2016 and will fully transition into phase two by 2018.

Phase Two: Transitioning to Long-Term Economic Opportunities (2017-2022)

This phase will focus on the development of long-term economic opportunities that will introduce new sectors and expand existing sectors to align with, and take advantage of, emerging needs and demands in global, provincial, regional, and local markets. The goal is to move to a new, more stable economic platform that will bring lasting prosperity to the region, mitigating the AAC downfall. Emerging trends with the potential to create new economic opportunities include food, water, climate change, and human migration.

In addition to working closely with business and community leaders, Cariboo Strong will connect with partners to engage with international experts and investors to develop new economic opportunities. Phase Two will be implemented in 2017 and will become the focus of our work by 2018.

Project Structure and Action Plan

The project structure and action plan for the Cariboo Strong project will employ a locally-built approach to realizing economic diversification, transformation, and growth. The project will support communities in a way that builds on collective knowledge, supports the values of the broader community and encourages local participation and ownership.

This project will seek engagement of and investment by current industry, business, and even non-profit (social entrepreneurial) players and the focus will be on community- and business-led implementation and action. It will also seek to attract new investors to the region. The project structure and plan include the following components:

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Sub-Regional Action

The project will be grounded in the three Cariboo sub-regions: South Cariboo, Central Cariboo & Chilcotin, and North Cariboo. Each sub-region will identify and prioritize key economic opportunities and challenges and will establish Sub-Regional Action Groups to develop and implement strategies to address these. The priorities established will:

- Align with global, regional, and local economic opportunities to add stability to the economic mix.
- Build opportunities within and between existing sectors to take advantage of existing investment and expertise.
- Pursue emerging opportunities in entirely new sectors, to diversify the economic base.

Community-to-Community Collaboration and Action

Where there is common ground and the potential for mutual benefit, Sub-Regional Action Groups will be encouraged and supported to collaborate on economic opportunities with other communities in the Cariboo and beyond. These opportunities could include collaboration on a broad range of issues, for example, production, marketing, transportation, research, skills training and education, and worker attraction.

Regional Collaboration and Long-Term Transformation

Globally, we are beginning to see the emergence of the ***Next Generation Resource Economy***. The ***Next Generation Resource Economy*** will see growth through the emergence of new markets and demand for new products. Energy will continue to be important, but there will be growing demand and pressure for increased food production, water supply, and climate change / greenhouse gas mitigation strategies. The Cariboo region is well-positioned for these opportunities and has the potential to become a global leader.

The economic and community transformation that the Cariboo is experiencing is being driven by climate change, global market volatility, and increased Indigenous rights and claims. It is an early bellwether for what other regions around the world will face. This region has the potential to serve as a research base and model, producing knowledge that can be translated and transferred across the globe. There will be an opportunity for government policy-makers, industry decision-makers, and researchers to learn from the experience of Cariboo. This in itself could create jobs, economic opportunities, and academic, research, and educational opportunities.

The project will, at the regional level, work to develop strategies to take advantage of the opportunities that are being created by these tremendous shifts in the global economy. It will do this by tracking and assessing emerging opportunities and then linking Cariboo resources to the new market opportunity.

Groundwork for Successful Implementation is Underway

Having developed and implemented community and economic action research and strategies in other communities, the CDI has successfully transformed intent and ideas into action and results. We have achieved this through engaging expertise and resources from a number of sectors.

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Together, the CDI and the CRD have already been laying the groundwork for the Cariboo. The following is a list of organizations that are aware of and interested in further involvement in this project:

- University of Northern British Columbia
- College of New Caledonia
- Oxford University, Said Business School
- Council of Forest Industries and COFI members
- Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition
- West Fraser
- Community Futures
- Mitacs
- Western Economic Diversification
- Vancouver Foundation
- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Tolko

We know that lasting transformation comes from and is embedded in the community. We employ focus groups, workshops, and action teams to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, secure investment, and move on action plans. By facilitating innovation, collaboration, and a shared vision for the future, we will support the Cariboo in building diversified economies and resilient communities, creating jobs for the next generation.

The New Economy in the Cariboo Region

If the Cariboo region is to continue to prosper in these new circumstances and to continue to be a significant economic generator for the province and for Canada, it must reimagine itself. It must find a new economic model; one that includes linkages to global, regional, and local opportunities to help build resilience and sustainability. Building on past work, the CRD/CDI/TNRD/Municipal partnership will continue to engage government, industry, and the not-for-profit sector as partners and collaborators in the transformation of the Cariboo region. Together, we can build prosperity for a new generation in the Cariboo.

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