



Featured inside: report on the business of law in B.C.

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Canada's China trade conundrum: the ties that bind

Despite calls to cut connections, Canada's economy remains tightly bound to China's | Page 5

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BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE FOR B.C.



Ghost kitchens tap restaurateurs' new entrepreneurial spirit

Food truck initiative helping Impark diversify its B.C. parking lot empire | Page 3

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IMMIGRATION: HOW THE SURGE WILL BOLSTER B.C.'S ECONOMY

HUMAN RESOURCES | Canada is embarking on an ambitious immigration initiative to attract 1.2 million new permanent residents over the next three years to drive economic activity in a country with an aging population and a low birth rate. But how will that influx increase prosperity and productivity in British Columbia and other provinces?

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REAL ESTATE

Survey finds growing public doubt about the power of provincial real estate taxes to lower the price of housing in the province | Page 7



ECONOMY

Economic outlook and B.C. business prospects brightening as the post-pandemic recovery continues to gain momentum | Page 18

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IATA rings airport efficiency alarm bells

Light from B.C.'s dimmer-switch reopening plan has raised optimism in tourism and other hard-hit industry sectors. But the route back to business before COVID-19 flipped the off-switch might be closed permanently, and, even if it were reopened, it might not lead to where businesses need to go to service their clientele in the post-pandemic world.

Airports and airlines are a prime example.

The **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, for one, is warning of "potential airport chaos" if governments do not move quickly to digitize the management of health credentials and other travel documents that will hit the industry with a tourist tsunami once pent-up demand meets loosened travel restrictions as vaccination programs get the upper hand on coronavirus infections.

According to the IATA, prior to the pandemic, passengers spent, on average, 1.5 hours per journey wading through border control, customs, check-ins and other travel processes.

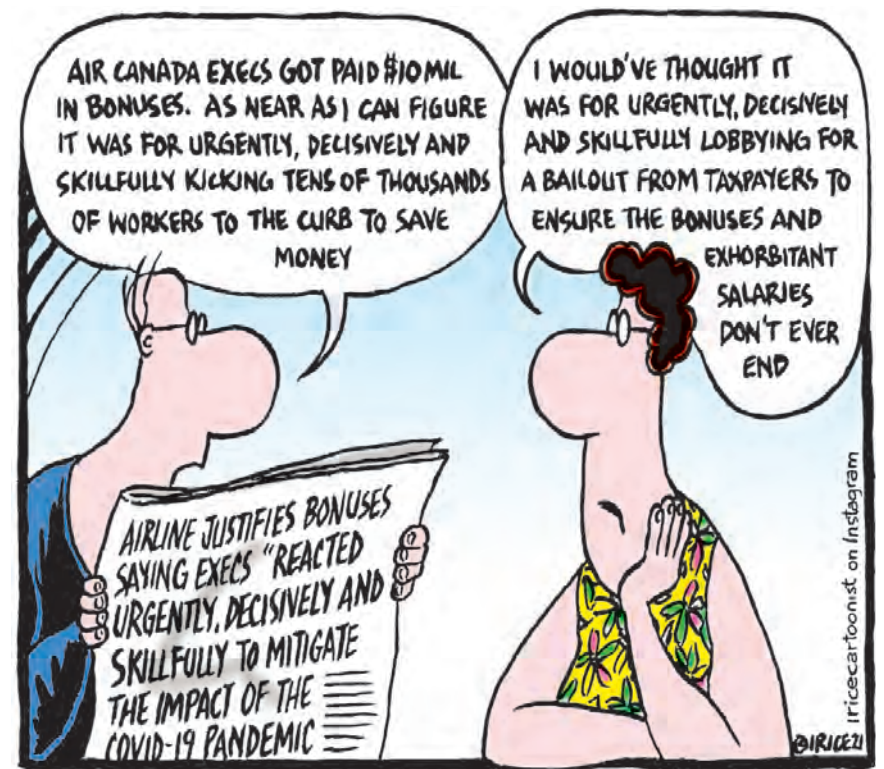
Not good. But it says data now shows that per-passenger airport processing times have doubled to three hours during peak times, even though travel volumes are 30% of pre-pandemic levels.

The IATA warns, alarmingly, that that processing time could balloon to eight hours per passenger per journey when passenger traffic hits 100% of pre-pandemic levels. That would seriously hamper any meaningful long-term air travel and tourism recovery.

Really not good. Betting on governments anywhere to move quickly to implement the digital automation of coronavirus vaccine and test certificate checks and myriad other efficiencies to avoid those projected passenger-processing logjams is a long shot at best.

But if the world can work together so efficiently to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, it should be able to do the same to establish a global system to ensure travellers are safe and that their destinations have assurances that they can open their borders again to international visitors and the economic benefits they bring.

INSIDE JOKE



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HOUSING

B.C. residential building permits fall 24% in April

The total value of residential building permits issued in Canada last month has pulled back from a peak in March, led by a double-digit decline in British Columbia. More than \$7.7 billion in residential permits were issued nationally in April, down 6.7% from a record high of more than \$8 billion in March. Monthly declines in B.C. (-23.7%) and Quebec (-14.9%) contributed most to that change, according to new data from **Statistics Canada**.



Clark Wilson is Pleased to Welcome Chris Sharpe

With over a decade of experience advising clients on their commercial real estate projects, Chris provides a meticulous approach to navigating the unique legal challenges and market opportunities present throughout British Columbia. His ability to deliver timely and practical advice allows clients to manage potential risks, facilitating their decision-making processes and the project's overall success.

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Yellow Pages continues to face 'pattern of complaints'

COURTS | Some small businesses are now taking legal action against former phone book giant

BY HAYLEY WOODIN
HWOODIN@BIV.COM

Small-business owners across the country continue to claim that **Yellow Pages Ltd.** (TSX:YP) fails to deliver on what it promises its customers.

More than 40 negative reviews against the company have been logged on *SiteJabber.com* in the last 12 months, warning buyers to beware of predatory sales tactics, unclear contract terms and poor customer service. The **Better Business Bureau** now warns potential customers of a "pattern of complaints" against the company, one that includes sales representatives not clearly outlining the services they're offering, poor communication

around how to cancel a contract and difficulty in trying to contact a representative or obtain a physical copy of a contract.

Two years ago, *BIV* published an in-depth investigation into the business practices at what was once the country's largest publisher of telephone directories.

According to current and former customers, Yellow Pages locks clients into verbal contracts that aren't fully clarified or agreed to. Business owners then face unexpected issues and additional costs when they try to cancel services. Many have also faced collection notices and lawsuits after refusing to pay the hundreds or thousands of dollars Yellow Pages claims they owe.

The sheer cost of disputing



Collaborative Law Corp. principal Nick Greer encourages B.C. businesses dealing with Yellow Pages contract issues to contact the firm or explore the CRT process | COLLABORATIVE LAW CORP.

a small claim in court is often enough to encourage parties to settle out of court, regardless of whether a settlement seems fair or just.

In a few instances, customers have launched legal actions of their own. Yellow Pages is facing a class action lawsuit in Quebec and a potential civil suit in Ontario.

The former phone book giant also lost a **Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT)** dispute in B.C. last year.

"The trouble with the contracts is that I find they're very cryptic as to what you're actually getting involved in," said **Nick Greer**, lawyer and firm principal of **Collaborative Law Corp.** in Nanaimo. The firm brought an application

to the CRT after it was unable to reach anyone at Yellow Pages to cancel a one-year advertising contract. The tribunal application noted that Yellow Pages continued to bill the firm for advertising that "was not of the quality agreed to," and that attempts to correct errors in Collaborative Law's online directory listing were ignored. Greer added that the firm was promised its listing would appear on the first page of search results, and that wasn't always the case.

Yellow Pages didn't respond to the dispute.

The CRT issued a default order to reimburse Collaborative Law more than \$1,200 for advertising

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Parkades versus parfais: Impark's diversification plan

ENTERPRISE | Florida company to partner with local restaurants to cook and deliver B.C. menu items

BY TYLER ORTON
TORTON@BIV.COM

With commutes into Vancouver tapering off amid the pandemic, the packed parkades typical of the downtown core have given way to some ghost town ambience over the past year.

Rather than letting prime parking spots turn to graveyards, the parent company of Vancouver-based parking giant **Impark** is setting its sights on ghost kitchens.

"The pandemic I think was just an accelerating force in terms of trying to think about how best to diversify a lot of these assets," said **Mason Harrison**, head of communications for Florida-based **Reef Technology Inc.**, which acquired Impark in 2018.

Reef is now tapping Surrey's Apollo Custom Manufacturing Ltd. to build at least two mobile kitchens to be deployed at Impark lots where local restaurants can get the American company's cooks to prepare dishes on their behalf as part of a revenue-sharing agreement.

"We pay for all of the capital on operational costs. So that includes the business operations, kitchen operations and food preparation. And then after we pay that restaurant a percentage of the top line sales, we cover all the costs, including supplies, labour, marketing," Harrison said, adding that delivery costs are covered as well. "The margins for restaurant



Rob Mallory, Apollo Custom Manufacturing Ltd.'s sales and marketing manager, inside one of the company's food trucks, which is Florida-bound once it's completed | CHUNG CHOW

are already like quite small. We're talking 7% or so off of the total gross revenue. And so if we can double a restaurant owner's revenue just by ... helping them expand to two locations instead of one, that's game changing for the entrepreneur."

Sophia Cote, Reef's head of public affairs for Canada, said the company is working with city hall on the permitting for the enterprise, because the ghost kitchens are not technically food trucks or bricks-and-mortar restaurants.

The hope is that local restaurants can begin partnering with Reef on the ghost kitchen business model by mid-July.

"Let's say ... there's a restaurant in Maple Ridge that is really looking to gain clientele in downtown Vancouver. They could really leverage our ghost-kitchen model in a parking lot in downtown Vancouver to get closer to that customer base rather than trying to find the capital to open up a location in downtown Vancouver, which as we know as Vancouverites, it is very expensive to do."

Apollo, which is building two mobile kitchens for Reef, has an option to build seven more for the Florida company.

"We've never been as busy as we are now," said **Rob Mallory**, Apollo's sales and marketing manager.

"We've had a lot of even local businesses decide that their brick-and-mortar [restaurant] was too expensive. They have enough ... customers that they can close up the brick-and-mortar and take it mobile, and use their name and their current customer base."

The typical street food vendor operates in a working space about 4.5 to 5.5 metres long; the ghost kitchens Apollo is building for Reef are 8.5 metres.

Mallory said the order for two units will be a test run for Reef to determine their functionality before deciding whether to use Apollo as a permanent ghost-kitchen supplier as the U.S. company

They could really leverage our ghost-kitchen model in a parking lot in downtown Vancouver to get closer to that customer base rather than trying to find the capital to open up a location in downtown Vancouver

SOPHIA COTE
HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
CANADA, REEF TECHNOLOGY

expands throughout Canada.

Ian Tostenson, president and CEO of the **BC Restaurant and Foodservices Association**, said he doesn't see this new emphasis on restaurant delivery fading even as pandemic restrictions are loosened and more British Columbians resume dining indoors.

"[The] takeout delivery business, which was a small part of my business before the pandemic, is now maybe 30% of my business," he said, referring to the industry at large.

"I do think that we are [better] positioned through all this in the future to withstand the next challenge that we have. I mean, when we started this [pandemic] primarily we were just ... solely relying on in-store dining, but it's been very creative around the edges to create other forms of revenue." ■

Marketing Metro in Canada's

PUBLIC RELATIONS | Vancouver needs to sell purpose, not

BY CHUCK CHIANG
CCHIANG@BIV.COM

With the return of international travel on the horizon, Canada's plan to attract more immigrants than ever over the next three years will likely see many of them land in the Lower Mainland.

But with municipalities likely to get more say about which new Canadians get to go where, Metro Vancouver analysts and researchers say the region needs to properly market itself to prospective immigrants to gain the maximum social and economic benefits of migration-driven activities.

Specifically, one researcher says, the city shouldn't focus on its lifestyle – often the most prominent asset of Vancouver that's recognized globally – in its messaging to prospective residents.

"One thing we learned from

our consultants is that you don't need to sell the lifestyle," said James Raymond, senior manager of research at the Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC). "Everyone knows Vancouver is world-class; you can't score any higher. So the recommendation is to sell all the other aspects. In all of our material, we never talk about lifestyle first. It's literally on the last page because you don't need to sell that."

"What you need to sell is the fact Vancouver is an amazing place to have a career. It's a place to make a difference. One particular strategy we've used is to sell Vancouver as a place of purpose ... Talking about progressive social movements is important because young people want to live in a place that represents their values."

Late last year, Ottawa announced ambitious plans to attract more than 400,000 new permanent residents to Canada

annually from 2021 through 2023. Such immigration levels have not been seen in the country since 1913, and the annual figures for the next three years surpass that recorded more than a century ago. Currently, Canada draws on average an annual new permanent resident count between the high 200,000s and the low-to-mid 300,000s, with COVID significantly disrupting that process last year.

"We do have a slowdown in immigration during COVID itself, but it's not clear that's going to persist," said Nathanael Lauster, associate professor of sociology at the University of British Columbia and principle investigator of the Metro Vancouver Zoning Project supported by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC). "And certainly, we have this ramp-up in immigration that's expected from government, and I would expect it to hit Vancouver as a gateway city."



Analysts say that more densification is needed in Metro Vancouver to increase housing affordability for newcomers | CHUNG CHOW

Ottawa's immigration push raises prosperity questions

ECONOMY | Federal government aims to bring in 1.2 million immigrants over three years

BY TYLER ORTON
TORTON@BIV.COM

With physical distancing and limited social circles a fixture of everyday life during the pandemic, Queenie Choo believes more newcomers to Canada than usual may have slipped through the cracks when it comes to support services typically offered to immigrants.

"Certainly our programs and services have pivoted themselves in terms of ... maintaining that connection virtually – but it is a different way of doing things," said the CEO of Vancouver-based immigrant and community services non-profit SUCCESS.

"And on top of that, it's also the escalation of incidents of anti-Asian racism and bigotry that really layer in additional emotional burdens to people, especially women, seniors and immigrants."

The past year has been challenging for all, she said.

But Canada is now embarking on one of its largest immigration pushes in recent memory, with Ottawa planning on bringing 1.2 million newcomers into the country over the next three years in a bid to stimulate an economy still bouncing back from

pandemic-induced restrictions.

Choo, who immigrated to Canada in 1980, said four major factors will need to be prioritized if the effort is to be successful: employment, language training, cultural integration and housing.

She said significant resources will need to be directed to settlement services as 400,000 immigrants arrive annually – most of whom will be settling in three cities: Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.

"You can see a lot of business has been down because of the pandemic," Choo said. "So, [for] many of those talented entrepreneurs, how can we help them to find a niche?"

Among the local programs being readied for deployment is the BC Tech Association's HyperStart initiative. The entrepreneurial boot camp is in the midst of accepting applications for its 2021 participants and will be focusing on entrepreneurs from new immigrant backgrounds.

Meanwhile, in a February forecast, RBC senior economist Andrew Agopsowicz predicted the country would likely see 275,000 new permanent residents settle in Canada "as COVID-19 headwinds continue, falling short of



SUCCESS CEO Queenie Choo: immigrants' success in Canada will be determined by employment, language training, cultural integration and housing | SUBMITTED

new 401,000 target."

Since that forecast, Ottawa invited 90,000 temporary foreign workers and international students already in Canada to apply for permanent residency.

Agopsowicz said in a followup analysis the move could be a "game-changer" for the federal government meeting its target.

"In the long run Canada does have the capacity to hit the ambitious targets set out last fall, with immigration once again turning into an important driver

There's really not much evidence that immigration has a significant impact on [prosperity] one way or the other

JOCK FINLAYSON
SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, BUSINESS
COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

of long-term population and economic growth," he said in April.

But economist Jock Finlayson, senior policy adviser to the Business Council of British Columbia, cautioned that while the immigration plan might boost topline economic growth, he does not foresee it increasing prosperity.

"You'll have a larger market of people living in Canada. They all consume goods and services; they all need housing; a substantial number of them will seek employment and obtain employment," he said.

"But the real measure of well-being is what's happening to individual prosperity. For that we look at GDP per person, we look at productivity and we look at what's happening to average

wages and incomes. And on those metrics ... there's really not much evidence that immigration has a significant impact on it one way or the other. It doesn't hurt."

Finlayson added it's not enough to simply boost the country's population if the goal is to improve the economy on a deeper level.

According to the World Bank, GDP per person stood at US\$2,259 in Canada and US\$3,007 in the U.S. as of 1960.

That 28% gap between the countries has consistently widened over the ensuing decades.

As of 2019, GDP per person stood at US\$46,195 in Canada compared with US\$65,297 in the U.S. – a difference of 34%.

During that period, Canada's population grew from 18 million to 37 million people.

But Finlayson also noted that without population growth, Canada faces a fate similar to that of Japan, in which a stagnant domestic economy prevails.

"I guess the question I would raise is, what does that [immigration strategy] do for prosperity?" Finlayson said. "It's not clear that that strategy will really deliver big gains – or even any gains – in prosperity as economists would measure it." ■

next immigration wave

lifestyle, to maximize immigration gains, analysts say

400,000 Number of new permanent residents Canada aims to attract annually from 2021 through 2023

200,000 Number of new permanent residents Canada traditionally attracts annually

“We should certainly expect a number of those people will land here first.”

The VEC is familiar with the task of selling the Lower Mainland to perspective newcomers. Even though its main mandate is to support local businesses, officials say foreign direct investment (FDI) attraction plays a key role – and with that comes the task of not only attracting investors, but also human resource talents to entice investment and

new business activity in Metro Vancouver.

“It used to be that talent would follow where the businesses go, right?” Raymond said.

“But that’s been flipped. We are increasingly seeing businesses and jobs going to the places where the talent is.”

The VEC’s view that Vancouver’s global sell to immigrants should focus on purpose and opportunities rather than the city’s obvious lifestyle perks comes from research. In 2015, the commission’s brand research of Vancouver found that global investors and talent ranked the city high for being green and sustainable, but also lower for industry innovation and creativity.

That is why the VEC pursued **Amazon.com Inc.** (Nasdaq:AMZN) so aggressively during the company’s 2017 search for HQ2. That pursuit eventually secured the tech retail giant’s commitment to two downtown

Vancouver office building sites – one of which is scheduled to be completed in 2023 in the former **Canada Post** office on West Georgia Street – despite losing out on HQ2.

Raymond called such a development, along with securing **Northeastern University’s** Vancouver campus in 2019, “a breakthrough” for the city’s image for the talent it wants to attract. He noted that a Destination Canada Mobility Forum career fair held in France prior to the pandemic drew thousands to the VEC kiosk – a trend that is expected to resume as soon as international travel normalizes.

“This fair was aimed at people who speak French, and we had people flying in from all over Africa,” he said. “We had people from India flying in to speak to us. It was unbelievable. People were lining up around the block to speak to us. And I’ve no doubt whatsoever that – as soon as the

taps get turned back on – we are going to back to exactly where we were before.”

There are challenges, however.

Along with its reputation of natural beauty and lifestyle opportunities, Metro Vancouver’s high cost of living and its penchant for attracting the ultra-rich have also garnered international attention in recent years.

Lauster said that will present the region with one of its key challenges as it looks to market itself to skilled immigrants who can choose to go anywhere in the world.

“Those things are hard to shift,” he said of the pros and cons of a city’s global reputation. “Vancouver has also acquired a bit of a reputation for wealthy people, so that’s a potential hazard that has emerged with respect to our reputation globally for immigrants. ‘Is this a spot for me? Can I afford to live there?’ Our housing market may give people

the impression they can’t afford to move here.”

Lauster therefore believes that further densification of the local housing market is needed, because the affordability of Metro Vancouver single-detached homes is unlikely to return.

To make the Lower Mainland attractive to talent, the region must make its housing more affordable while maintaining superior quality of life.

“Single detached houses have really become a bit of a luxury item,” Lauster said. “With respect to most of the people who will be coming here, most migrants are not that wealthy but are still happy to come here. I think Vancouver has attempted to hold up the idea that you can live outside of a detached house in a North American city and still have a really good lifestyle. That’s where I think the brand of Vancouver is heading for most migrants.” ■

Canada tightly bound to China despite calls to cut connections

ASIA-PACIFIC | Trade ties difficult to loosen even though there is a public, political push to alter course

BY CHUCK CHIANG
CCHIANG@BIV.COM

The latest statistics show how difficult it will be for Canada to reduce its trade with China, the country’s second-largest partner, despite increasing evidence of Beijing’s willingness to wield political ties as weapons.

That is the observation of several experts, who noted that despite growing public disillusionment with China, Canada will find it difficult to extricate itself from supply-chain networks and trade ties built over multiple decades.

“It is a constant topic of discussion, whether Canada should pull one of the very, very weak levers that they have [on trade with China],” said **Carlo Dade**, director of the Trade & Investment Centre at the **Canada West Foundation**. “I haven’t heard anything specific, but it makes perfect sense. But the first point I make to folks ... is that we are not a centrally planned economy. The private sector makes the decision on where to trade, not the government.”

There has been some anticipation of Canada diversifying trade and supply chains away



GWENGOAT/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

from China in the last two years because of increasingly frosty relations between Ottawa and Beijing. Some moves may indicate a similar will from the federal government, such as Canada launching free-trade talks with Indonesia earlier in 2021. (Analysts also anticipate that Canada could follow Europe’s lead in resuming trade talks with India, the world’s second-most-populous country and a staunch rival to China).

However, despite persistent tension since the arrest of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. CFO Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver in late 2018, followed by two retaliatory arrests of Canadians

in China and a Chinese ban on Canadian imports like canola and red meat, as well as Beijing’s human-rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, Canadian exports to China rose in 2020 to \$25.2 billion – up 7.5% from 2019; 2020 exports to China exceeded all previous years on record other than 2018 (\$27.7 billion).

According to **Statistics Canada’s** International Trade Explorer, China was one of only a handful of markets where Canadian exports increased last year. Others include Great Britain, the European Union, Peru and the Philippines.

Hugh Stephens, distinguished

fellow at the **Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada** and vice-chairman of the Canadian Committee on Pacific Economic Co-operation, said it is important to note that 2019 was a down year for Canada-China trade, in part because of Beijing’s trade ban on Canadian canola and red meat.

Stephens noted that the private sector ultimately decides where to do business, so a large-scale change in current trade patterns would likely require a change in global economic fundamentals – something that does not happen overnight.

“Given the role that China plays globally and in the North American supply chain, it’s not a short-term proposition to suddenly turn off the switch,” Stephens said. “There is a gradual diversification taking place as China’s costs increase, as companies assembling in China move operations to Southeast Asia.... But that’s long term. And other than exerting brute force – as China has done with our Australian friends – there’s not a huge amount of things governments can do.”

China’s heated row with Australia helps explain why Canadian exports may have benefited

in the last year. China’s resurgent consumer demand has driven barley, wine, beef, lobster and timber imports.

All of those commodities produced by Australia have been targeted by Beijing trade barriers after Canberra called for an international investigation into China’s early handling of COVID-19.

And despite political solidarity among the Five Eyes (including Canada and Australia) to take a harder line against China, Canadian exporters have not had the same hesitation in filling the demand left by Australian goods – resulting in a 38% spike in farm, fish and food product exports to China last year.

“You do need to diversify ... but you still have to go to markets based on demand and price,” Stephens said. “There’s no question that the way China plays the game makes us all more vulnerable, but at the moment, we happen to be benefiting from that. They could beat up again on us ... but the role China plays on commodities – especially those from Western Canada – is very hard to replace.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Vietnam should play a major part in Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy



PODIUM

GEOFF DONALD

Canada and Vietnam have shared a longstanding relationship based on trade, development and immigration. Over the past several years,

this relationship has deepened considerably.

With Vietnam's new national leadership put in place for 2021 to 2026, the Canada-ASEAN Business Council (CABC) urges Canada to secure its economic interests with Vietnam as a key tenet of Canada's evolving Indo-Pacific strategy.

Since 2015, Vietnam has been Canada's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia with two-way trade reaching a record \$11.2 billion in 2020. With the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Canadian and Vietnamese exporters and investors now enjoy increased market access and tariff reduction in a rules-based trading environment.

Two-way trade has increased by 12% over 2019 and by 37% compared with 2018, when the CPTPP began to take effect.

With a rapidly growing population that is expected to reach 120 million by 2050 and a strong GDP forecast of 6.5% growth in 2021, Vietnam is a high-potential market for Canadian companies especially in key industries such as agri-food.

Aside from the trading of goods, a wide range of opportunities is available in areas such as investments, financial services, infrastructure development, supply chain diversification, technology and human capital development. To fully capture these opportunities and ensure inclusive growth, both governments should boost their support for small and mid-size enterprises to maximize the benefits of trade deals such as the CPTPP.

At its recent 14th National Assembly, the Vietnam government finalized a political transition for the 2021 to 2026 period.

Vietnam remains anchored into its four-pillars leadership structure where political responsibilities are shared between the positions of general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), president, prime minister and chair of the National Assembly.

Nguyen Phu Trong was re-selected as the CPV's general

secretary while Nguyen Xuan Phuc, who served as prime minister from 2016 to 2021, takes on the role of president. The country's new prime minister is Pham Minh Chinh, who previously was the head of the CPV Central Organizing Committee and a deputy minister of public security.

The National Assembly chair is filled by Vuong Dinh Hue, a former deputy prime minister and minister of finance.

It is expected that the new Vietnamese government will continue its predecessors' economic growth policies. This would include prioritizing foreign investment attraction, new multilateral trade deals, and other reforms to further integrate Vietnam with the global economy.

In foreign policy, Vietnam will likely look to avoid choosing sides between economic superpowers while engaging through multilateral institutions such as ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), the United Nations and with other middle power countries like Canada to provide strategic options.

This political stability and policy continuity has instilled confidence among the domestic and foreign private sectors and observers, particularly due to Vietnam's excellent domestic COVID-19 response and economic growth despite the pandemic's impact.

The CABC acts as the voice of the Canadian private sector in ASEAN, and our members, including many of Canada's leading firms such as Manulife, have

a significant and longstanding presence in Vietnam, and many more companies are following suit.

Similarly, Vietnam's most innovative companies such as automotive manufacturer VinFast are prioritizing investing in and selling to the Canadian market.

Canada's and Vietnam's commitment to multilateral trade through the CPTPP and critical new opportunities such as a potential Canada-ASEAN free trade agreement positions Vietnam as an essential partner for Canada in the decades ahead.

As Canada looks to develop an Indo-Pacific strategy, we urge public policymakers and business leaders to prioritize this relationship by:

- increasing support to small and mid-size enterprises looking to take advantage of the CPTPP;
- expanding Canada-Vietnam business collaborations in high-growth sectors such as agri-food, aerospace, infrastructure, financial services and digital economy; and
- negotiating a Canada-ASEAN free trade agreement to increase the overall opportunities for Canada in Southeast Asia. ■

Geoff Donald is the CABC's advocacy chair and managing director at Asia Engagement Consulting Group. This column was co-written with Wayne Farmer, CABC president and managing partner at Islemount Capital Advisers, and Thi Be Nguyen, CABC's chair of Canada activities and manager at the National Bank of Canada's office of the president and philanthropy.

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Proposed New Inflation-Adjusted Development Contributions

On June 23, 2021, City Council will review an annual report which recommends new inflation-adjusted Development Cost Levies (DCLs) and CAC Targets, as well as adjustments to Density Bonus Contributions rates for referral to a Public Hearing in July 2021.

DCLs are fees collected by the City of Vancouver from all new development. CAC Targets are contributions provided by property developers when City Council grants development rights through rezoning. Density bonusing is a zoning tool that permits additional floor space in exchange for amenities and affordable housing.

These fees help pay for amenities such as parks, affordable housing, childcare centres, libraries, community centres, transportation and other infrastructure that meet the needs of our growing city.

If approved, new rates would come into effect on September 30, 2021.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Chris Clibbon, 604-873-7237
chris.clibbon@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/financegrowth

Visit: vancouver.ca Phone: 3-1-1 TTY: 7-1-1

CANADA TIGHTLY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Dade said it's possible to divert some trade from China in the short term.

For instance, a shift towards crushed plant proteins instead of raw goods like dry peas, lentils and chickpeas would naturally facilitate a shift of exports from China (where the raw seeds are in demand) to Europe and North America (where plant protein is needed).

But making that change, again, is not easy. Dade noted that attempts to expand the plant protein sector in Alberta – where anti-Chinese sentiment in government is the strongest among provinces – faltered because the provincial government cut funding to the cause.

“Here you have the province that's the most worried about trade dependence on China and

is the most vocal about cutting trade with China,” Dade said. “And the one thing they could do ... to keep the peas in Canada to process and to export elsewhere, neither the farmers nor the government were interested [in]. Producers are not interested in taking the risk of developing a new market, so we are stuck in this trade-dependency pathway.”

Stephens said Canada could also take advantage of existing trade deals. While free-market governments usually cannot dictate the direction of trade, they can make access to markets more attractive. Agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, with Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia and others, and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, with the European Union, are the best examples of such market-access facilities, Stephens said.

For Dade, however, Canada's trade history with the United States might point to the outcome of its struggle with China.

“Look at the softwood lumber trade,” Dade said. “If anyone has given us just cause to really diversify, it would be the Americans with softwood lumber. Time after time after time, they've imposed penalties and fines. They've blocked imports. They ignored rulings from the WTO [World Trade Organization] and the NAFTA panel. Everything [trade related] that China has done, the U.S. has done 10-times worse.... But over the past couple of decades, softwood lumber export numbers haven't moved except for periods of decrease in demand in the U.S.”

“If we haven't learned with the United States, I see nothing happening with China to give any indications we would learn here.” ■

REALESTATE

POWERED BY 

British Columbians losing faith in ability of taxes to ease home prices



PODIUM

MARIO CANSECO

BC's current provincial government is into the eighth month of a four-year majority mandate, but Premier **John Horgan** will observe four full years in office later this year. The October 2020 election was dominated by the way the province faced the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the opposition had a difficult time gaining traction on it or other matters.

For the past few years, we have seen a significant proportion of British Columbians identifying housing, homelessness and poverty as the most important issue facing the province and the country. The numbers are unique across Canada. Quebecers are now more likely to be concerned about environmental issues,

while the economy and jobs is the prevalent worry in Alberta.

In British Columbia, the barrage of new housing taxes began under the government of **Christy Clark** and the **BC Liberals** in 2016, with the announcement of a 15% foreign buyers tax for properties in Metro Vancouver. While the tax was immensely popular, with support for its implementation reaching 76%, most British Columbians did not regard it as a perfect solution. More than two-thirds (68%) expected the legislation to be unsuccessful in making it easier for British Columbians to afford a home.

A few months later, Clark failed to secure a new term in office, and the incoming **BC New Democratic Party (NDP)** government introduced new housing measures. When **Research Co.** and **Glacier Media** recently asked British Columbians about these policies, they continue to be regarded in a positive light by a majority of residents.

Three in four British Columbians are in favour of two modifications that the current government made to the foreign

buyers tax it inherited: expanding the tax to areas outside of Metro Vancouver (75%, down four points since 2020) and increasing it to 20% from 15% (also 75%, down four points).

More than two-thirds of the province's residents also support the introduction of a tax of 0.2% on the value of homes between \$3 million and \$4 million, and a tax rate of 0.4% on the portion of a home's value that exceeds \$4 million (69%, down seven points) and with an increase in the property transfer tax to 5% from 3% for homes valued at more than \$3 million (67%, down five points).

The supposedly controversial "speculation tax" is still well received, with 70% of British Columbians (down seven points) agreeing with its implementation in specific urban areas targeting foreign and domestic homeowners who pay little or no income tax in the province and those who own second properties that are not long-term rentals.

Aside from the guidelines that are already in the books, we continue to see more than seven in 10 of the province's residents

(72%, down six points) calling for a "New Zealand-style" regulation that would ban most foreigners from buying real estate in Canada.

While sizable majorities of British Columbians continue to favour the five most recent housing measures, support is not as high as it was a year ago. However, the main complexity that this survey outlines for the government is the growth of cynicism on just what these popular taxes will mean to those who are interested in entering the real estate market.

Last year, a majority of British Columbians (57%) expected the actions of the provincial government to be effective in making housing more affordable in the province. This year, the positive emotional connection between current policies and future aspirations is drastically lower, at 42%.

In different terms, this means that the perception of housing taxes enabling more people to acquire property went from a margin of almost two to one to an even split among British Columbians. Yes, the housing taxes are backed by most, but

the notion of growing opportunities for residents is no longer as glowing.

As the province begins to get ready for a return to life after the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an inherent danger for the provincial government when it comes to the housing file. The lessons of 2016 and 2017 are worth remembering.

Back then, a provincial administration that had overstayed its welcome was starting to be seen in a more contemptuous light by voters. This survey provides a cautionary tale. The housing taxes are still popular, but fewer residents think they will work to get more people inside their own homes. ■

Mario Canseco is president of Research Co.

Results are based on an online study conducted on June 1 and June 2 among 800 adults in British Columbia. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in British Columbia. The margin of error, which measures sample variability, is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Construction starts on North Van's massive Lonsdale Square

Darwin Properties has begun construction on Phase 1 of Lonsdale Square, a 6.6-acre North Vancouver development that will transform the upper area of Lonsdale Avenue.

One of the largest projects ever built in the City of North Vancouver, the mixed-used community will feature more than 800 new homes,

including seniors housing, non-profit and below market rental housing, a new 2.25-acre city park and a revitalized Harry Jerome Community Recreation Centre.

Phase 1 construction will include a 113-unit rental building, a partnership between Darwin Properties and **Minto Properties Inc.** that will include the city's first new seniors-assisted housing in 30 years.

The six-storey Sunrise Senior Living facility will have 100 units for



Lonsdale Square's Phase 1 includes a 113-unit rental building | SUBMITTED

assisted living and memory care. "We know there is a spectrum of

housing needs across the community," said City of North Vancouver Mayor **Linda Buchanan**. "The construction of these new units means that more families, young people and seniors will be able to afford staying in the community they call home."

This rental buildings will be the first for **Minto Apartment Real Estate Investment Trust**, which is partnering on the project, said Minto CEO **Michael Waters**.

Completion of the first two

buildings is expected in late 2023, with move-in scheduled for the same period. When completed, Lonsdale Square will include almost 700,000 square feet of office, retail and residential. Its first phase comprises the rental and the seniors housing building. The second phase will include residential condos, additional rental housing, as well as restaurants, retail amenities and daycare facilities, according to Minto.

— *Western Investor*

10 big ideas for economic reconciliation

Join **BIV** and 10 prominent Indigenous leaders for a live virtual discussion on economic reconciliation. The event marks **National Indigenous Peoples Day** and celebrates the launch of **BIV's** inaugural Indigenous business magazine, *Mákook pi Sélim*. Hear directly from 10 business leaders, advocates and community builders as they each lay out their vision for economic reconciliation in British Columbia.

BIV

Monday June 21st, 12-1pm

Register by scanning QR code here:



This event is sponsored by:



FINANCE

B.C. small-business optimism stays buoyant



DATA POINTS

BRYAN YU

Small-business confidence in B.C. was positive in May despite effects of “circuit breaker” restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic’s third wave, according to the latest Business Barometer reading from the **Canadian Federation of Independent Business**.

The 12-month index came in at 68 points. While this was lower than April’s reading of 69.4, it far exceeded the demarcation level of 50. A value above this level means the number of businesses expecting better performance outnumbers those expecting a worse performance. B.C.’s reading was second only to Ontario’s.

The short-term outlook netted out positive for the first time since February 2020. A weaker short-term index trend compared with other provinces could reflect the fact that economic performance in B.C. has generally fared better than provincial peers over the past year while restrictions were more modest, meaning relatively less upside.

While divergent across industry lines, optimism is likely rising among firms as vaccinations continue to roll out quickly

while third-wave restrictions are bearing fruit and lowering the pace of COVID-19 cases. Circuit-breaker restrictions were rolled back in late May, and with the province setting out the conditions for a further return to normal in coming months, the outlook continues to brighten amid strong global economic growth and a low-interest-rate environment. For the hardest-hit service sectors reliant on tourism and major events, the path to reopening is also in sight. Payroll employment counts in B.C. jumped in March, albeit preceding more restrictive third-wave measures and job losses. Based on employer data reflecting employees receiving benefits or wages, non-farm payrolls rose 1.2% or 26,754 positions. This was the strongest monthly gain since October and the first year-over-year increase since February 2020. The latter reflected base-year effects of the pandemic on payroll that began in March 2020. At 2.26 million positions, levels were still 4% below February 2020.

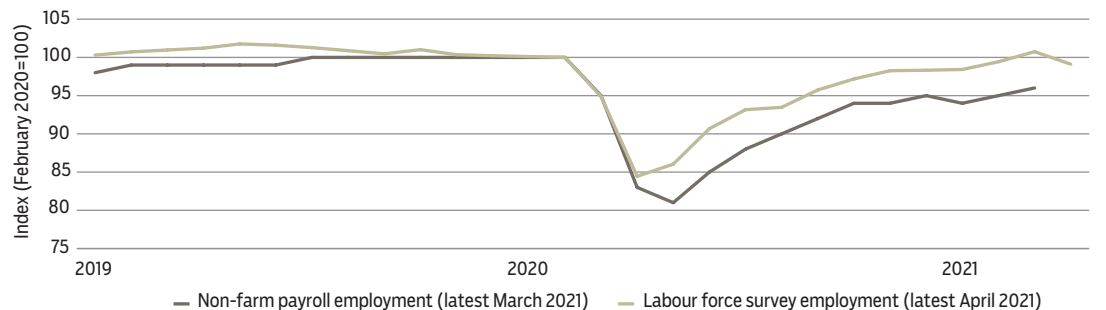
Hiring growth was broad-based. The retail sector drove nearly one-third of the March increase with growth of 2.9% (8,067 positions). Other key contributors included health care and social assistance (1.7% and or 4,926 positions), accommodations and food services (up 1.6% or 2,791 positions) and professional and scientific/technical services (up 1.5% or 2,117 positions). ■

Bryan Yu is chief economist at Central 1 Credit Union.

JOB GROWTH STABILIZES

Employment in B.C. well above 2020 trough

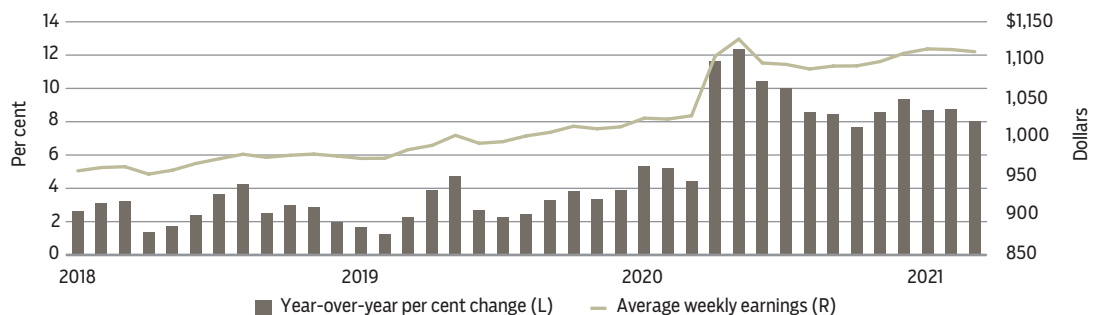
Different metrics for measuring employment show similar trend



SOURCES: STATISTICS CANADA, CENTRAL 1. LATEST: FEBRUARY 2021

B.C. weekly earnings level off during pandemic

March payroll employment counts post strongest monthly gain since October

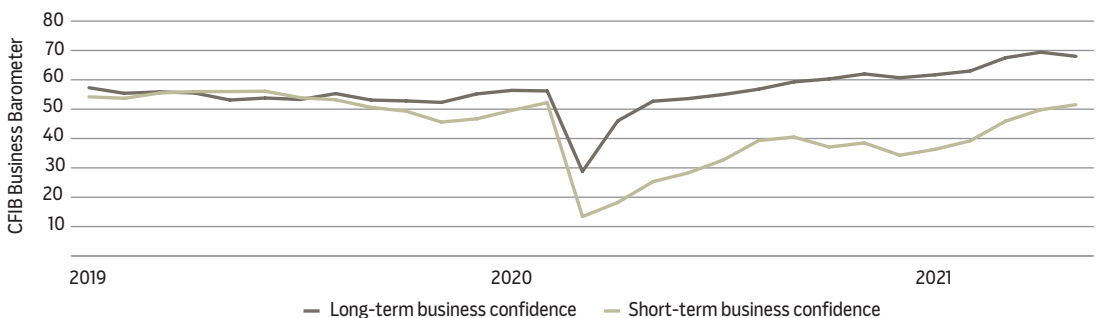


SOURCES: STATISTICS CANADA, CENTRAL 1. LATEST: FEBRUARY 2021

CONFIDENCE IS POSITIVE IN MAY

Businesses more confident about long-term than near-term prospects

Short-term outlook positive for the first time since February 2020



SOURCES: CFIB, CENTRAL 1. LATEST: MAY 2021

INSIDERTRADING

The following is a list of stock trades made by corporate executives, directors and other company insiders of B.C.’s public companies filed in the week ended June 3, 2021. The information comes from a compilation of required reports filed with the **BC Securities Commission** obtained from **DisclosureNet.com**.

INSIDER Eric S. Sprott, 10% owner
Company: **New Found Gold Corp.** (TSX-V:NFG)
Shares owned: 27,551,200
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: \$1,118,000
Trade: **Sale** of 100,000 shares at a price of \$11.18 per share

INSIDER Rui Feng, director
Company: **Silvercorp Metals Inc.** (TSX:SVM)

Shares owned: 5,618,000
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: \$232,200
Trade: **Sale** of 30,000 shares at a price of \$7.74 per share

INSIDER Rui Feng, director
Company: **New Pacific Metals Corp.** (TSX:NUAG)
Shares owned: 10,242,400
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: \$137,200
Trade: **Sale** of 20,000 shares at a price of \$6.86 per share

INSIDER Jerry Kroll, director
Company: **ElectraMeccanica Vehicles Corp.** (Nasdaq:SOLO)
Shares owned: 2,755,798
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: US\$188,541

Trade: **Sale** of 49,616 shares at a price of US\$3.80 per share

INSIDER Nicholas James Campbell, insider
Company: **Artemis Gold Inc.** (TSX-V:ARTG)
Shares owned: 776,500
Trade date: Jun 1
Trade total: \$92,260
Trade: **Acquisition** of 14,000 shares at a price of \$6.59 per share

INSIDER David Allan Knight, director
Company: **Freegold Ventures Ltd.** (TSX:FVL)
Shares owned: 10,000
Trade date: May 31
Trade total: \$74,000
Trade: **Sale** of 100,000 shares at a

price of \$0.74 per share

INSIDER Talal Riad Yassin, 10% owner
Company: **Tribe Property Technologies Inc.** (TSX-V:TRBE)
Shares owned: 2,820,055
Trade date: May 28, Jun 1
Trade total: \$72,696
Trade: **Acquisition** of 18,900 shares at prices from \$3.64 to \$4.03 per share

INSIDER Robert Alexander Lambert, director
Company: **Hillcrest Energy Technologies Ltd.** (OTCMKTS:HEAT)
Shares owned: 1,860,000
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: \$66,000
Trade: **Sale** of 300,000 shares at a

price of \$0.22 per share

INSIDER Claudia Tornquist, director
Company: **Silver One Resources Inc.** (TSX-V:SVE)
Shares owned: 280,000
Trade date: May 31, Jun 2
Trade total: \$57,760
Trade: **Sale** of 76,000 shares at a price of \$0.76 per share

INSIDER Douglas Hurst, director
Company: **Northern Vertex Mining Corp.** (TSX-V:NEE)
Shares owned: 4,227,600
Trade date: May 28
Trade total: \$57,000
Trade: **Sale** of 150,000 shares at a price of \$0.38 per share ■

Meet Burnaby's Clio, the Salesforce for lawyers

TECHNOLOGY | Practice management platform cuts costs, improves efficiency for small law firms

BY NELSON BENNETT
NBENNETT@BIV.COM

Jack Newton describes himself and **Rian Gauvreau**, co-founders of the legal-tech firm **Clio**, as “two hammers looking for nail.”

That was back in 2008, after the emergence of the cloud signalled a whole new wave of disruption in software. Newton and Gauvreau, who are software developers, had been looking for business niches to fill.

They settled on law firms and founded **Themis Solutions Inc.**, which does business as Clio. Specifically, they focused on practice and customer relationship management software for solo lawyers and small law firms – ones that lack the resources enjoyed by large law firms for managing all the non-legal administrative tasks of the legal profession, like client intake, contact management, calendaring, document management, timekeeping, billing and trust accounting.

“They don’t have the human infrastructure supporting them that a lawyer in a large firm does,” Newton explained.

What they ended up building was the equivalent of **Salesforce** (NYSE:CRM) for lawyers – a cloud-based platform that automates and simplifies much of the non-legal work conducted by paralegals, secretaries, bookkeepers and lawyers.

Neither Newton nor Gauvreau have legal backgrounds, although Gauvreau ran the IT department of **Gowling WLG**, where he identified potential opportunities for software. Through the **Law Society of British Columbia**, they



The small law firm market is “enormous” says Clio co-founder and CEO Jack Newton | ROB KRUYT/BIV FILES

learned that most of the lawyers the society deals with are solo and belong to small firms.

While there are other enterprise software programs available for small business, like Salesforce, Newton and Gauvreau saw there was a need for something tailored to the legal profession, and especially the small law firm market.

“Law firms do have very specific needs,” Newton said. “They’ve got very rigorous standards when it comes to compliance and security and handling customer data. And also, I believe that lawyers have a very strong preference for solutions that are designed specifically for lawyers.”

“There’s a lot of lawyers that work really long hours, and part of that is because they’ve got really poor systems in place, and Clio can help give them some of that time back. It simply helps law firms run the business aspect of running a law firm and handles everything related to interacting with your client as well.”

Clio’s clients now range from single lawyers to firms with as many as 100 lawyers.

“Our core market is still made up of mostly solos and small firms, just because that’s what the demographics of the space are overall,” Newton said.

Momentum Business Law in Ottawa is a typical client. It has 18 employees, and has been using Clio since 2012. Founder **Megan Cornell** worked for a big law firm for 10 years before starting her own small firm. She has been using Clio since the beginning and likes the fact that it is cloud-based and integrates with other software, like Microsoft Office.

“It’s really a collaboration tool, so it’s meant to be able to share within your firm really well,” Cornell said.

It dramatically cuts down the time and money that she would otherwise have to spend on billing and scheduling, she said.

“At my old firm, billing took the first three weeks of every month,” she said. “It was just a total nightmare, and it would take up a huge portion of our staff time. Now, for us, it’s just seamless. Booking appointments would be another example that can take up a lot of

human time.”

At my old firm, billing took the first three weeks of every month. It was just a total nightmare, and it would take up a huge portion of our staff time. Now, for us, it’s just seamless

MEGAN CORNELL
FOUNDER, MOMENTUM BUSINESS LAW

“Because we focus on the business aspect of running a law firm, not on actual law itself, we don’t need to worry about any of those specific changes in the actual law,” Newton said.

Clio operates on a subscription basis, with costs ranging from US\$39 to US\$99 per month. It automates many of the tasks that would otherwise have to be performed by a secretary, bookkeeper or lawyer, which reduces administrative costs.

For example, a scheduling tool allows potential new clients to easily schedule an initial consultation over a secure Zoom call – something that more people are now comfortable with, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Clio for Clients app allows clients to receive secure messages from a lawyer on their app, review and fill out documents and pay bills on their smartphones. It also offers search engine optimization,

making it easier for people to find them online.

“The Clio-using lawyer stands out because they’re using our Clio Grow product that ensures that they’ve got a great Google My Business listing,” Newton said, adding that customers are encouraged to provide reviews. “So we optimize their online footprint.”

In some cases, using Clio allows law firms to get recurring revenue from clients, Newton said. He cited wills as an example.

Typically, a person hiring a lawyer to make up a will would pay a one-time fee of anywhere from \$300 to \$1,000. Using Clio, lawyers can offer a will service that is updated annually for a small annual fee, making it more affordable for some people.

“All of a sudden, a \$100-a-year subscription or a \$50-a-year subscription is something that is way more accessible to the average consumer, as opposed to \$1,000 up front,” Newton said.

Newton confesses that he and Gauvreau never imagined that the company they built would become as big as it has.

“We thought, initially, this would be a cute little niche to build a lifestyle business in, and we wondered how big the solo/small firm lawyer market could be,” Newton said. “And it turns out it’s enormous. Eighty per cent of lawyers practise in firms of 10 lawyers or less, and a full half of all lawyers practice as solos.”

Clio is now officially B.C.’s newest unicorn company. Following a recent US\$110 million Series E financing, it is now valued at US\$1.6 billion and has 150,000 users in more than 130 countries. ■

BRIEFS

HEALTH

B.C. keeps COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations low

B.C.’s recent success in limiting the spread and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be continuing, according to data released June 2.

The success in fighting the pandemic, however, does not mean that the province plans to accelerate its plan to reopen the B.C. economy or allow travel across the province.

Travel restrictions across the province are to be in place until at least June 15, Health Minister **Adrian Dix** told a press gallery scrum.

“With B.C.’s Restart plan progressing, this is a time of transition for all of us,” he and provincial health officer **Bonnie Henry** said in a joint statement. “We are slowly and cautiously moving forward through Step 1, and in the weeks ahead, activities that have been on hold will resume once again.”

While the number of new COVID-19 cases rose by 10, compared with the total on June 1, to 194, that number is far below the average number of daily infections a week before.

RESOURCES

Forestry plan calls for big boost in Indigenous participation

The provincial government is promising to boost Indigenous engagement in forestry as it sets out on the largest series of policy updates for the sector since the early 2000s.

Victoria’s plans would double the amount of replaceable forest tenure held by Indigenous nations from the current levels of 10%, according to the strategy unveiled on June 1.

“It’s absolutely vital we do not repeat the colonial activities of the past and dictate to First Nations what they do

in their territories,” B.C. Premier **John Horgan** said during a media briefing, later invoking the horrifying discovery of 215 Indigenous children’s bodies found at the former site of a Kamloops residential school.

“Despite record-high prices, many forestry communities are struggling.” **John French**, chief of the **Takla First Nation**, said during the briefing that the plan would ensure Indigenous peoples in B.C. would remain active decision-makers in the management of forests.

YELLOW PAGES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

costs and \$100 in CRT fees, which Greer confirmed has been done. The tribunal dismissed a claim for \$1,500 to cover the firm's time and effort spent trying to resolve the dispute.

"We're assisting quite a few people now in getting out of Yellow Pages contracts," Greer said. "There's a little bit of an industry now that involves getting people out of the Yellow Pages contracts."

The CRT began resolving most B.C. small claims disputes up to \$5,000 in June 2017. **Court Services Online** data shows that Yellow Pages has been involved in more than 270 legal cases in B.C., most of which were small claims in the **Provincial Court of British Columbia** and brought forward by Yellow Pages before 2017. Unlike court, the CRT was created to be navigated by users rather than lawyers. Its fees are significantly lower, and disputes can be filed and managed remotely. A CRT dispute is by design a less daunting and costly proposition than a court action.

Collaborative Law's dispute is the first Yellow Pages small claims dispute to be heard by the CRT.

"It's a good option for people

who feel like they can't contact Yellow Pages," Greer said. "I'm strongly recommending if they feel as though they're not able to contact Yellow Pages or they feel that they've unfairly been trapped in a contract with Yellow Pages, look into the CRT process."

Yellow Pages responds

The issues Collaborative Law reported experiencing appear across hundreds of negative online reviews and comments against Yellow Pages. A major theme of those complaints is a lack of certainty around contract length and how a contract can be cancelled.

"We're not going to get everybody happy, but I think we're trying our best and still trying to run a business at the same time, because if we give everybody everything they want, of course, then we probably wouldn't be profitable," **Sherilyn King**, Yellow Pages' senior vice-president of sales, marketing and customer service, told *BIV*.

King said a lot of the challenges referred to online happen within the first year of a one-year contract. Yellow Pages bundles together a number of services offered at a discounted rate with a minimum 12-month commitment. She said **Google** (Nasdaq:GOOGL), **Facebook Inc.** (Nasdaq:FB) and other

We're not going to get everybody happy, but I think we're trying our best and still trying to run a business at the same time

SHERILYN KING

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT OF SALES, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE, YELLOW PAGES

competitors will target Yellow Pages customers with deals of their own, which prompts customers to try to cancel pieces of their bundle or their full contract.

"We'll try to work with them as best we can, but we also understand that we can't please everybody because, ideally, they're fully aware they're in a 12-month contract," King said.

While some customers sign paper contracts, most of the business owners who have spoken with *BIV* have signed up for advertising services over the phone. They are required to state that they agree to a verbal contract, said **Treena Cooper**, senior vice-president, secretary and general counsel at Yellow Pages.

"That's a verbal contract conducted over the phone, but the sales rep does run through the

terms and conditions with you – the most important terms and conditions.... The foundations of the agreement that are entered into between the two parties," she said.

Customers are then sent a digital copy of the contract that lists all of the terms and conditions, after they have agreed to buy services over the phone.

Cooper said the way to cancel a contract depends on a contract's specific terms. King also noted that the company runs several directories in Greater Vancouver, each with their own start dates and billing cycles. One 12-month contract for advertising in Burnaby may end in the middle of a separate 12-month advertising package in North Vancouver, for example.

"I'm not sure how the confusion happens, but it is part of the voice signature that they agreed to the term when they're signing up," said King.

Lawsuits on the horizon

Cooper told *BIV* that Yellow Pages is "vigorously defending" a proposed class action in Quebec.

The lawsuit, which has been authorized to proceed, hinges on a unique article in Quebec's civil laws that allows an individual to cancel a contract before its term. The suit argues that, while this

right can be renounced, Yellow Pages failed to explain to its customers that in entering into Yellow Pages contracts, customers were giving up that right.

"It's evident, in the evidence that we got on examination, that the plaintiff was aware of the terms and conditions. And the terms and conditions clearly stated that the term of the agreement was for a fixed period of time and could not be terminated," Cooper said.

Calex Legal Inc., which is bringing the class action forward, previously told *BIV* the firm expects between 2,000 and 3,000 individuals and businesses to join the class.

In Ontario, the founder and executive producer of **PopVid Studio** has issued a demand letter through his lawyer asking Yellow Pages to cancel his verbal contract and reimburse him for payments made.

"I don't think their customer service is good," **Rundong Li** told *BIV*. "They don't listen to you. They just take money – no services, no delivery of any anything,"

Li said he has filed his claim in court, which alleges fraud, and is waiting on next steps. He has stopped paying his monthly fee and added that Yellow Pages continues to call and email him asking for payment. ■

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Biggest law firms in Metro Vancouver

RANKED BY | Number of lawyers practising in the region



Rank '21	Law firm	Managing partner(s)	Focus areas	Year founded	Additional staff '21/'20	Partners/ Associate counsel/ Associates	No. of lawyers '21/'20
1	Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP 550 Burrard St Suite 2900, Vancouver V6C 0A3 P: 604-631-3131 F: 604-631-3232 fasken.com	William Westeringh, managing partner, B.C. region	International business law and litigation for every sector in business, industry and government	1889	216/ 220	NP NP NP	155/ 147
2	Borden Ladner Gervais LLP 200 Burrard St Suite 1200, Vancouver V7X 1T2 P: 604-687-5744 F: 604-687-1415 blg.com	Steve Winder, regional managing partner	Business and corporate commercial, commercial real estate, financial services, disputes and intellectual property	1911	185/ 199	66 10 60	136/ 134
3	Lawson Lundell LLP 925 Georgia St W Suite 1600, Vancouver V6C 3L2 P: 604-685-3456 F: 604-669-1620 lawsonlundell.com	Clifford Proudfoot, managing partner	Mining, corporate commercial law, real estate, energy/public utility and regulatory, litigation, labour and employment, pensions and employee benefits	1886	131/ 145	68 5 57	130/ 124
4	Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP 595 Burrard St Suite 2600, Vancouver V7X 1L3 P: 604-631-3300 F: 604-631-3309 blakes.com	Peter O'Callaghan, office managing partner	Corporate finance and securities, corporate and commercial litigation, financial services, infrastructure and real estate	1856	106/ 96	40 0 69	109/ 107
5	Norton Rose Fulbright LLP 510 Georgia St W Suite 1800, Vancouver V6B 0M3 P: 604-687-6575 F: 604-641-4949 nortonrosefulbright.com/ca/en	Kieran Siddall, managing partner, Vancouver office	Real estate, estates, trust and wealth management, business law, dispute resolution and litigation, employment and labour	1794 ¹	NP/ 179	47 7 45	99/ 98
6	Clark Wilson LLP 885 Georgia St W Suite 900, Vancouver V6C 3H1 P: 604-687-5700 F: 604-687-6314 cwilson.com	James Speakman, managing partner	Commercial real estate, capital markets and securities, information technology and intellectual property, mergers and acquisitions, estates and trusts	1911	153/ 154	57 2 38	97/ 93
7	DLA Piper (Canada) LLP 666 Burrard St Suite 2800, Vancouver V6C 2Z7 P: 604-687-9444 F: 604-687-1612 dlapiper.com	Robert Seidel, Canada managing partner	Full-service business law firm	1892	129/ 137	42 4 37	95/ 89
8	Harper Grey LLP 650 Georgia St W Suite 3200, Vancouver V6B 4P7 P: 604-687-0411 F: 604-669-9385 harpergrey.com	Jonathan Meadows, managing partner	Medical negligence defence, insurance, commercial litigation, business law, professional regulation, environmental, family, workplace, wills and estates, class actions, securities, construction and engineering, aboriginal business law, insolvency, defamation, privacy, mediation	1907	137/ 127	29 16 44	89/ 81
9	McCarthy Tétrault LLP 745 Thurlow St Suite 2400, Vancouver V6E 0C5 P: 604-643-7100 F: 604-643-7900 mccarthy.ca	Sven Milelli, regional managing partner, B.C.	Business law, litigation, real property and planning, tax, labour and employment	1855	NP/ 98	41 NP NP	88/ 85
10	Farris LLP 700 Georgia St W Suite 2500, Vancouver V7Y 1B3 P: 604-684-9151 F: 604-661-9349 farris.com	Jeffrey Kay, managing partner, Vancouver, Peter MacPherson, managing partner	Corporate and commercial, litigation, employment and labour, tax, wealth management	1903	98/ 118	48 6 33	87/ 83
11	Alexander Holburn Beaudin + Lang LLP 700 Georgia St W Suite 2700, Vancouver V7Y 1B8 P: 604-484-1700 F: 604-484-9700 ahbl.ca	Christopher Hirst, managing partner	Litigation/dispute resolution, insurance, business law, construction and engineering, aviation, labour and employment	1973	130/ 116	41 8 37	86/ 82
12	Dentons 250 Howe St Suite 2000, Vancouver V6C 3R8 P: 604-687-4460 F: 604-683-5214 dentons.com	John Sandrelli, managing partner	Real estate, infrastructure/construction, corporate, litigation, restructuring/insolvency	2013 ²	122/ 119	40 7 35	82/ 74
13	Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP 550 Burrard St Suite 2300, Vancouver V6C 2B5 P: 604-891-2787 F: NP gowlingwlg.com	Brent Kerr, managing partner	Intellectual property, real estate, environmental law, securities and corporate finance, Indigenous law	1903	121/ 126	44 3 23	74/ 78
14	McMillan LLP 1055 Georgia St W Suite 1500, Vancouver V6E 4N7 P: 604-689-9111 F: 604-685-7084 mcmillan.ca	Cory Kent, office managing partner	Capital markets, mergers and acquisitions, litigation, commercial real estate transactions, restructuring and financial services	1904	NP/ 98	22 12 20	62/ 55
15	Boughton Law Corp 595 Burrard St Suite 700, Vancouver V7X 1S8 P: 604-687-6789 F: 604-683-5317 boughtonlaw.com	Karen Justel, Jim Coady, Luca Citton, board members	Business, dispute resolution, personal, public sector	1949	65/ 67	21 18 14	53/ 58
16	Bennett Jones LLP 666 Burrard St Suite 2500, Vancouver V6C 2X8 P: 604-891-7500 F: 604-891-5100 bennettjones.com	Radha Curpen, Vancouver managing partner	Business law, litigation, regulatory and tax with focus on energy, mining, finance, tech and real estate	1922	46/ 52	24 4 23	49/ 42
17	Richards Buell Sutton LLP 401 Georgia St W Suite 700, Vancouver V6B 5A1 P: 604-682-3664 F: 604-688-3830 rbs.ca	Jeffrey Lowe, managing partner, Angela Spanjers, managing partner, Surrey	Advanced education and research, business transactions, commercial real estate, litigation, wealth preservation	1871	100/ 78	19 5 24	48/ 45
17	Stikeman Elliott LLP 666 Burrard St Suite 1700, Vancouver V6C 2X8 P: 604-631-1300 F: 604-681-1825 stikeman.com	Richard Jackson, managing partner	Mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance and securities, public-private partnerships, real estate and corporate commercial litigation	1952	78/ 84	17 7 24	48/ 44
19	Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP 885 Georgia St W Suite 2200, Vancouver V6C 3E8 P: 604-691-6100 F: 604-591-6120 cassels.com	Kristin Taylor, managing partner	Mining, M&A and corporate finance, secured and unsecured lending, restructuring, cannabis	1888	44/ 37	16 0 28	44/ 34
19	Roper Greyell LLP 745 Thurlow St Suite 1850, Vancouver V6E 0C5 P: 604-806-0922 F: 604-806-0933 ropergreyell.com	Delayne Sartison, Gavin Marshall, managing partners	Employment, labour, human rights, health and safety, investigations, privacy and freedom of information	2006	34/ 34	23 0 21	44/ 41

Sources: Interviews with above law firms and BIV research. Other firms may have ranked but did not respond to information requests by deadline. NP Not provided 1 - Year firm was founded in the U.K.; merged with Bull Housser & Tupper, whose Vancouver office opened in 1890, on January 1, 2017 2 - Closure date of merger among SNR Denton, Fraser Milner Casgrain and Salans

Business in Vancouver makes every attempt to publish accurate information in the List, but accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Researched by Anna Liczmanska, lists@biv.com.

Next week's list – Biggest hotels in Metro Vancouver



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Region's top law firms recover from pandemic year

ANALYSIS | Median one-year growth rate in the number of lawyers doubled over the past year

BY ALBERT VAN SANTVOORT
AVANSANTVOORT@BIV.COM

Metro Vancouver's biggest law firms have recovered from the downturn they suffered with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past year, the average number of lawyers in the region

grew by 3.3% to 83.8 in 2021, according to data collected on *Business in Vancouver's* Biggest Law Firms in Metro Vancouver list (page 12).

That growth allowed top law firms to regain the loss in the average number of lawyers they suffered in 2020. Last year, during the pandemic, that number

fell by 0.25% from 2019.

However, the median number of lawyers grew last year, despite the pandemic, and boasted twice that growth in 2021. This suggests that smaller companies lower on the list grew more than larger companies higher on the list.

Over the past year, No. 19

Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP recorded the highest percentage increase in its number of lawyers by far: 29.4%, which is nearly double that of No. 16 **Bennett Jones LLP**, which had the second-highest growth rate on *BIV's* list at 16.7%.

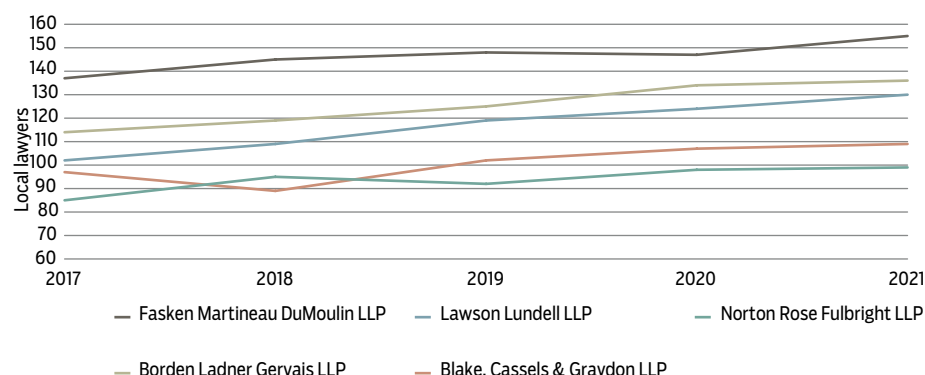
The average one-year growth in the size of companies on the list

also doubled as the average increase in their number of lawyers increased 6.4% in 2021 compared with 2.6% in 2020.

Among the five biggest law firms on the list, No. 3 **Lawson Lundell LLP** recorded the fastest five-year growth in the number of lawyers it employs: 27.5% to 130 in 2021 from 102 in 2017. ■

Number of local lawyers at B.C.'s five biggest law firms

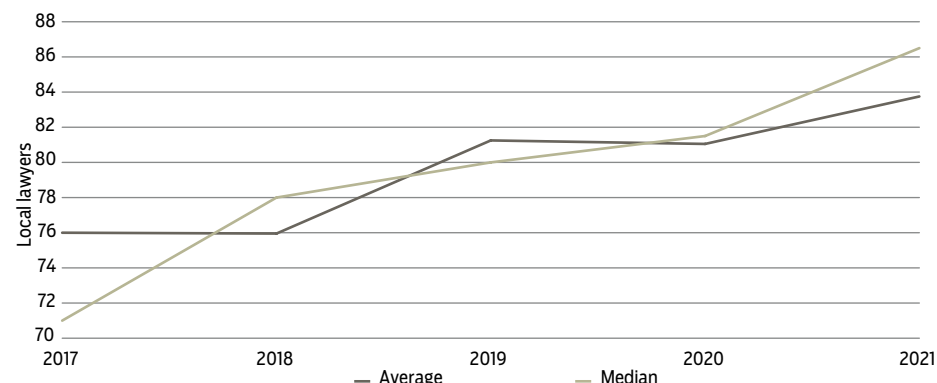
Lawson Lundell recorded the largest five-year increase at 27.5%



SOURCE: BIV LIST

Average number of lawyers at B.C.'s top law firms

3.3% increase over the past year has made up for pandemic losses



SOURCE: BIV LIST

\$1.1m payout warns employers to watch their contract language



PODIUM

MIKE HAMATA

Things at the fish oil factory had taken a dark turn for **David Matthews**. For 14 years, Matthews was a key senior management employee at **Ocean Nutrition Canada** in Nova Scotia. He was an elite omega-3 chemist, one of only a few such scientists internationally. In 2007, everything changed. Ocean began "a four-year 'campaign,' characterized by lies and dishonesty, to push Mr. Matthews out of operations."

For a time, he endured, knowing that if he held on until the business was sold (which he believed was impending) he would be entitled to receive a bonus payment of around \$1 million under Ocean's Long Term Incentive Plan (LTIP).

In June 2011, it all became too much for Matthews, and he left for other employment. Thirteen months later, Ocean was sold for \$540 million.

Matthews brought a wrongful dismissal claim against Ocean, alleging that he had been constructively dismissed and was entitled to his LTIP payment resulting from the sale of the company.

The dispute went all the way to the **Supreme Court of Canada**, which on October 9, 2020, determined that Matthews was entitled to a LTIP payment in the amount of \$1.1 million, plus damages for a reasonable notice period of 15 months, less amounts he earned in mitigation at his new employment.

Matthews vs. Ocean Nutrition Canada Ltd., 2020 SCC 26, is a reminder to all employers to closely review any performance, bonus or incentive plan, to ensure those plans very clearly address all circumstances in which an employee will not be entitled to a payment. Many employers will be surprised to learn that, following *Matthews*, commonly used language (e.g. "you must be actively employed") is no longer sufficient.

The Ocean LTIP, incorporated into Matthews' terms of employment, stated that it was expressly "of no force and effect" if he ceased to be an employee, regardless of whether he "resign[ed] or is terminated,

with or without cause."

With this backdrop, the court applied a two-step framework to determine Matthews' entitlement to the LTIP payment. First, but for the unlawful termination, would he have received the LTIP? Second, are there any express terms that unambiguously take away that right?

The court answered the first question in the affirmative: Matthews would have been entitled to the LTIP payment, but for the constructive dismissal.

More interestingly, the court answered the second in the negative. Because the termination was "unlawful" (i.e. without notice), Matthews was not merely dismissed "without cause" (captured in the LTIP) but was wrongfully dismissed "without cause and without notice" (not captured in the LTIP).

If that seems like a particularly strict interpretation against Ocean, that's because it was. The court noted that the LTIP (as is typical) was not negotiated or bargained by the parties, but was instead imposed by Ocean on Matthews. Any terms that purported to limit Ocean's liability were therefore interpreted very strictly against Ocean. The

Matthews vs. Ocean Nutrition Canada Ltd. is a reminder to all employers to closely review any performance, bonus or incentive plan to ensure those plans very clearly address all circumstances in which an employee will not be entitled to a payment

court did not go so far as to propose limiting language that would be effective, but did say that on these facts, even if the LTIP plan referred to "unlawful termination," that would not be clear and unambiguous enough to displace Matthews' common-law entitlement to the LTIP payment.

But, if he had an employment

contract that allowed Ocean to terminate him without cause and on payment of damages in lieu of notice, and if Ocean had exercised that option rather than constructively dismissed him, the termination would not have been "unlawful," and the limiting language in the LTIP would likely have been sufficient for Ocean to avoid an obligation to pay LTIP.

Whether a terminated employee is entitled to a bonus, performance or incentive payment arising during the period of reasonable notice still depends on the terms of the applicable plan or policy. However, *Matthews* makes it clear that employers who seek to rely on language limiting entitlement will be held to an extremely high standard and commonly used language is no longer enough. ■

Mike Hamata is a partner at Roper Greyell and practises in all areas of employment and labour law.

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this article, you are urged to seek specific advice on matters of concern and not to rely solely on what is contained herein. The article is for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.



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Moving into the future: 2021 Transportation Survey

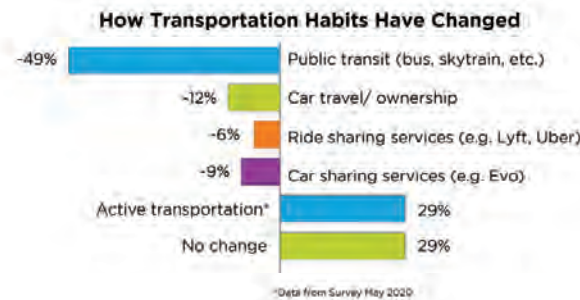
TRANSPORTATION | What comes next for transportation in the Lower Mainland?

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade released the results of our 2021 Transportation Survey in conjunction with Transportation Forum 2021, presented by Deloitte. The survey was commissioned to create a better understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on transportation habits across the region and the extent to which those changes will become permanent.

The initial impact of the pandemic on transportation in the lower mainland has diminished in the past year, but it remains unclear whether a full return to normalcy will occur in the near-term future, or at all. A survey of Metro Vancouver residents was conducted by Mustel Group between April 16 and 28, 2021, the

survey found that:

- When asked about trips taken by transit, respondents reported a decrease of 49% compared with pre-pandemic levels, a substantially higher reduction than trips taken by car (12%).
- 50% of all respondents said they expect 'most' (11%) or 'some' (39%) of the changes in transportation habits will be permanent.
- Support for investment in new public transit projects, such as the Surrey-Langley Skytrain and extension to UBC remains high, with 92% of Vancouver residents and 91% of respondents in Metro Vancouver supporting continued investment.
- Availability of funding for



transportation infrastructure was ranked most likely to impact how we move and travel around the region (50%), followed by population growth (41%) and technology (30%). The survey found 21% of respondents have recently moved, or plan to move, further from Metro Vancouver urban cores for affordability/more space with

35% noting that their move was due to the pandemic. This was highest among residents aged 18-34 (25.7%) and 35-54 (25.5%). This finding further highlights the importance of attracting and retaining young people.

"The results of this survey clearly illustrate the ongoing support for public transit investment both in Vancouver as well as the

lower mainland," said Bridgitte Anderson, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "Right now, important progress is being made to expand transit service, including the recent announcement of major construction beginning on the Broadway Subway Project. It is clear that the public wants to ensure that this momentum is not lost, and we do not emerge from the pandemic only to be stuck in traffic."

"As employees return to offices and students to schools, travel patterns will shift again, but the results clearly indicate it will be some time, if at all, that travel habits will resemble pre-pandemic habits," said Evi Mustel, President and co-founder of Mustel Group. **SB**

B.C. reopening plan: What you need to know

REOPENING | Step 1 already underway

The B.C. government unveiled their phased reopening plan at the end of May, a four-step roadmap to reopening the province, with Step 1 beginning on May 25. For businesses, this means allowing indoor dining for groups of up to six people, extending liquor service to 10 p.m., and the start of a gradual return to workplaces

and offices.

"This provides a framework for business owners to plan for reopening in ways that will protect both customers and staff, and it also gives British Columbians clarity on what is to come through the summer and fall," said Bridgitte Anderson, President and CEO at the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "The four phased

plan shows that the hard-work and sacrifice made by millions of British Columbians during the third wave is paying off."

Timelines are contingent on meeting vaccination targets and a decline in both active cases and hospitalizations. Over 70% of B.C. residents aged 18+ have now received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Step 2 could

begin as early as June 15, and will allow banquet halls to reopen with limited capacity and safety plans, small in-person meetings, and recreational travel within the province.

Steps 3 and 4 could begin as early as July 1 and September 7, respectively. Step 4 includes fully reopened offices and workplaces, travel within Canada, and

normal social contact.

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is committed to working with stakeholders in both business and government to ensure that we embrace the lessons learned during the pandemic and continue to work together in building a prosperous and sustainable economy in the Lower Mainland. **SB**



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FROM OUR MEMEBERS

RESILIENCE | Setting a new bar – catering in the time of COVID-19

Pandemic pivot created a new capacity for innovation

When the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade asked us to help them turn their annual Governor's Gala and Rix Awards into an equally gratifying virtual event, "Operation Wow Factor" was born. As a long-standing member and catering partner, Edge Catering has worked closely with the Board of Trade on many events over the years, but this was a new challenge entirely.

Hosting a memorable virtual event after a year of 'Zoom fatigue' is no easy task. Our goal was to provide an elevated in-home culinary experience for two, complete with an artisan charcuterie and cheese presentation, hand-crafted canapés, and desserts. The gala boxes also included Mission Hill wine, Queen Bee floral bouquets, and customized cookies and menu cards.

The complexity of delivering an at-home dining experience worthy of a black-tie event is enormous. Despite being an established business in the Lower Mainland, Edge Catering had to transform to survive when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. That transformation was a key component in enabling us to achieve the amazing results that

one participant reflected on by saying, "From the elegant packaging to the beautiful array that made up the charcuterie board, Edge Catering exceeded all our expectations."

Exceeding expectations doesn't happen by accident. "Operation Wow Factor" required meticulous planning and a step-by-step methodical approach; our mission was to deliver a black-tie culinary experience to 375 homes. Designing an inspired culinary experience for delivery to hundreds of households is one thing, putting it into practice is another. From accommodating complex dietary restrictions and adhering to critical food-safety guidelines to ensuring that the beautifully arranged packages arrived intact, this was our most ambitious project since the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

Planning a catering project of this magnitude was an exercise in collective coordination and communication. Defining clear goals was critical to successfully executing the operation, and we worked closely with the team at the Board of Trade from the outset. Our owner Judy Reeves, and Chef Jasmin Porcic decided on the aesthetics and an array



of specialty meats and cheeses to accompany exotic tropical fruits. House cured vegetables, hand-crafted pâtés, and artisan chutneys rounded out the menu of delicacies. After agreeing on the contents of each package with the senior leadership team, it was time to factor in the dietary restrictions, individualized menu cards, and packaging requirements.

Planning is imperative to success, but it's all for nothing if the execution doesn't deliver. Days before the event, our staff were slicing, dicing, and trimming all the varied components of the gala packages, while

simultaneously preparing the take home Easter dinners we were offering at the time as well. Dedicated, hardworking staff are at the heart of every successful business, and our brilliant Corporate Catering Manager Selina Chow, oversaw the planning and delivery of hundreds of fragile, temperature-sensitive packages over the course of two days.

Throughout the entire process, nothing was left up to chance. We engaged all the project stakeholders in deliberative planning, right down to the minutiae of the ribbon on the package and individualized name tags with handling instructions. This experience has

Planning is imperative to success, but it's all for nothing if the execution doesn't deliver



emboldened our team. We can execute incredibly complex projects with a 360-degree approach that will result in an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.

As a highly customized caterer with years of expertise, we have the ability and know-how to deliver an elevated experience, whether that be virtual, in-person (when allowed), or a combination of the two. Edge Catering - "We'll take care of you!" Follow us on social media @edgecaterers. JR

Judy Reeves is the owner of Edge Catering.

INSPIRATION | One-to-one, with John Bromley

A lifelong love of giving inspires this local business leader

Welcome to the latest installment of Q&A, our regular series of one-to-ones with some of Greater Vancouver's leading business figures.

This time, our subject is Charitable Impact Founder and CEO John Bromley.

What was your first job?

A paper route. I delivered the Real Estate Weekly starting in grade 3 and moved to the Courier in grade 4! I delivered papers until grade 7 or so. I worked through my high school years in other jobs. My parents were pretty strict about having a job if we wanted money to spend. Those years formed the basis of my financial literacy as well as

my sense of responsibility and accountability at an early age.

Tell us a little bit about where you think there's untapped potential in Greater Vancouver.

Youth today have unprecedented access to information and can use technology to create progress. In many ways, those that use the benefits of technology to advance their knowledge, understanding, and engagement with ideas seem to be ahead of where my generation was at the same point in our lives. However, I also have concerns about youth today who get too lost in all the meaningless content online because they are likely behind in many ways.



John Bromley

What is the most important lesson, business or otherwise, life has taught you?

You'll never achieve anything if you don't try. Setting out to do

something and being persistent about it is critical. While competency and knowledge are essential, you have to have something to apply them to. If you never take that first step and get started, you can't achieve goals. Failing along the way is part of the journey, so learn to appreciate all that is wonderful about failures.

What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?

Between the ages of 18 and 22, I spent several months each year in Asia. When I was working in Cambodia as an 18-year-old, I got caught in the middle of a military coup and was evacuated overland to Thailand by the Australian military.

If you could leave one professional legacy behind, what would it be?

Every year, fewer Canadians are

giving charitably. At Charitable Impact, our tools and services help people become more regularly engaged in giving back. The legacy I'd like to be part of leaving behind is reversing the tide from declining participation to the development of larger numbers of donors who make charitable giving a part of their budget and their life. JB

Charitable Impact is an online giving platform that makes it easy to support any registered charity in Canada, raise money through crowdfunding, track impact over time, and send charitable dollars to individuals. An Impact Account helps people manage their charitable giving and create the change they want to see in the world, all from one place. Charitable Impact has already helped over 146,000 Canadians donate more than \$775 million to thousands of charities nationwide.

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It's time to reconsider lowering the voting age in Canadian elections



PODIUM

KIRK LAPOINTE

The pressure to lower the voting age to 16 from 18 is an idea that will not go away.

It appears we are headed toward another decision on the age limit before long.

It is time to open our minds to the concept.

Vancouver council will deal with a motion this week to write the **BC NDP** government to endorse the concept. The **Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)** wants the **John Horgan** government to sanction 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in civic elections. Horgan's NDP and the **Green Party of BC** have passed resolutions at their conventions in support. Organized labour and the **BC Teachers Federation** are aboard. Scotland, Austria and Argentina permit it, as do many jurisdictions within other countries.

The provincial government itself has sat on the fence, probably because it's not a political winner quite yet. In a poll for our publications at **Glacier Media** earlier this year, **Research Co.** found that 64% of British Columbians opposed the idea. Only 28% supported it.

It is easy, with our supposed benefit of life experience, to dismiss the notion of a 16-year-old voter on the basis of a momentary surveillance of **Instagram** or a visit to a teen-teeming mall. Anecdotes are handy that way when we need to confirm biases.

On the other hand, anecdotally, I have known teens who pay closer and more enthusiastic attention to public issues than do people two and three times their age – just as I know adults who pay two and three times closer and more enthusiastic attention to public issues than do other adults.

There are excellent rights-based arguments to lower the voting age. In today's Canada, a 16-year-old has reached the age of consent, of licenced driving, of applying for a passport, of working most everywhere and certainly of paying taxes – all privileges with deep relevance to electoral participation. With

such agency, it is incongruent not to provide the vote.

There are also excellent policy-based arguments. Parties align their priorities to voters and ignore non-voters, old and young alike. Issues of importance to teens don't need to be on the radar of parties because it costs nothing to ignore them. A teen's rights and responsibilities, then, don't necessarily extend into political attention on their priorities.

The idea's proponents, no different than its opponents, employ self-interests so obvious as to be too transparent. Supporters generally occupy parties whose policies logically would attract a younger vote; opponents hold policies that wouldn't.

There is also a lingering myth about apathetic youth. Research suggests low voter turnout among them owes more to disconnection from political institutions and their processes than to disinterest in issues. It also has something to do with a life phase of one's late teens to early 20s, when the influence of parents declines, when education ends and jobs and longer-term relationships begin, sometimes in new communities. Politics temporarily takes a backseat.

Indeed, there is research that suggests 16-year-olds are more likely to vote than are those a few years older, usually because of the influence of living with their parents.

Given that certain issues hold higher value to younger people – economic and social equality and climate change, for instance – one would assume that left-leaning governments would love to grant an additional cohort the power of the vote. But – and I am back into anecdotes and experience here – if the young mind is more impressionable, it is also less compromising. Any party that dilutes its policies is susceptible to rejection.

It's not as if granting the vote to 16-year-olds will mean a flood of 16-year-old voters, either, because it's not as if an election is held every year. Even though the voting age is 18, many don't get to exercise that franchise until 19, 20 or 21. A voting age of 16 would bring many more voters aged 18 and 17, too.

While we're debating the value of granting additional voting rights, it is also time to demand more of those already with those rights. We have just

had to complete a census that carries with it a penalty if it's not done. A vote ought to be no less of a societal requirement than a census, with incentives when one partakes and penalties when one evades. Similarly, we ought to be able to cast a ballot in any jurisdiction in which we own a business – the connection to that district in many ways is political and ought to furnish a right of electoral participation. And yes, we are ready at last for online voting as an option to broaden participation.

We might remember what it was like to be 16, but today's 16 is more like my 21. Some of us might feel we're coddling youth in a child-focused world, but young people are exposed to a far more adult environment at an earlier age than ever. They aren't the children we were, and their exclusion from voting forestalls an important developmental step for us and them.

The pandemic has aged, even matured, many of us. I certainly feel two years older. Why not let someone two years younger vote? ■

Kirk LaPointe is publisher and editor-in-chief of *BIV* and vice-president, editorial, of *Glacier Media*.

Major recovery promises business boom for agile B.C. companies



PODIUM

JEAN-FRANÇOIS PERRAULT

The global economy is in the midst of a powerful recovery, even as COVID-19 continues to pose a threat – albeit diminishing – to public health. In fact, the strength of the current global rebound has generally caught participants in the global economy off guard.

The same dynamic is at play in Canada and British Columbia. While provinces continue to deal with a challenging public health situation, some, including B.C., are already planning for a phased reopening of the economy. This reopening, combined with a range of economic drivers, should lead to rapid growth over the next couple of years. We expect the B.C. economy to expand by 6.4% this year and another 4.4% in 2022, making this the highest observed growth since 1987-88.

Rarely have fundamentals appeared so positive. Looking externally, the United States is set to experience spectacularly strong growth of nearly 7% this year followed by growth of nearly 4.5% next year.

Roughly 50% of B.C.'s merchandise exports go to our southern neighbour, so a strong U.S. economy has powerful impacts on our own economy. The strength in the United States, combined with a robust rebound in China and other parts of the world, has led to a powerful bounce-back in commodity prices. Softwood lumber prices, for example, are near record highs and are multiple times their historical average.

Looking internally, last year's fiscal support package created a surge in personal and non-personal deposits that largely remain in the financial system. Canadian firms and households held over \$350 billion more in deposits in February this year relative to last February. These funds will eventually be spent, invested or used to pay down debt. There is already plenty of evidence to suggest that households have been eager to buy a broad range of goods, which in many cases has led to inventory

shortages. Anyone try to buy a bicycle recently?

Equally importantly, the rise in equity and housing markets has substantially increased household wealth in Canada. There are, of course, important distributional impacts as wealth is concentrated in higher-income households, but wealth effects are nevertheless an important driver of consumer activity in Canada. While we do not expect house prices to continue to rise at the pace observed in recent months, we think the insufficiency of home construction in light of past and expected population growth will continue to exert upward pressure on house prices even as interest rates eventually rise. The situation in the housing market is also leading to a surge in new construction and renovations. This, too, is expected to continue, and perhaps even accelerate as building materials become easier to source as the year progresses.

Owing in part to the factors above, we have witnessed a spectacular recovery in employment in B.C. April employment, still impacted by COVID containment measures, was a mere 23,000 off its pre-pandemic level. While unemployment

remains well above pre-pandemic levels, we expect that to fall sharply as we reopen.

Business confidence is also on the rise, with the **Canadian Federation of Independent Business'** business barometer for B.C. near the peak levels seen over the 2016-18 period. Firm creation has been rapid, and there are now more businesses operating in B.C. than existed pre-pandemic.

Perhaps the biggest economic kick will come from a resumption of tourism when borders are eventually reopened. Prior to the pandemic, tourism accounted for about 3.5% of provincial GDP. **Destination British Columbia** reports only 9,631 visitor arrivals in March 2021. For perspective, March 2019 saw 346,276 arrivals.

We know from survey data and U.S. cruise and airline bookings that there is massive pent-up demand for travel, and a rapid resumption of tourist inflows will likely occur when the decision is made to allow tourist travel.

Adding to these positive factors, the **Bank of Canada** is likely to keep interest rates at current levels until 2022's second half, so financing costs should

remain very low from a historical perspective. There are clear inflationary pressures linked to supply shortages now given the surprisingly rapid economic recovery. We think those pressures will fade in the fall and allow the **Bank of Canada** to raise rates gradually beginning next summer.

It's tempting to look at our public health challenges and conclude that our economic situation is precarious. There are still too many British Columbians who remain deeply affected by the pandemic and whose economic fate is tied to lasting success in our fight against COVID-19. Economic fundamentals are, thankfully, in a much better position than our public health situation. We are in the early months of what appears to be a nearly unprecedented two-year period of growth. Businesses that are able to look through current pandemic challenges and plan for a better future are likely to have a big advantage over firms that wait for further evidence that the recovery is moving ahead. ■

Jean-François Perrault is Scotiabank's senior vice-president and chief economist.

TROUBLE

WHO'S GETTING SUED

These corporate claims were filed with the BC Supreme Court registry in Vancouver. Information is derived from notices of civil claim. Civil claims have not been tested or proven in court.

DEFENDANT

Canadian Dehua International Mines Group Inc.

PLAINTIFF

Canada Zhonghe Investment Ltd.

CLAIM

US\$3,922,000 for debt.

DEFENDANT

XS Supply LLC

PLAINTIFFS

Aleksandar Services Ltd. and Omnico LLC

CLAIM

US\$972,941 for personal protection equipment.

DEFENDANT

Geoqwest Ventures Inc.

PLAINTIFF

Wabimusqua Oil and Gas Ltd.

CLAIM

\$499,990 for repayment of a shareholder's loan.

DEFENDANTS

Port Capital Development (EV) Inc. and Evergreen House Development LP

PLAINTIFF

Two Pillars Construction Ltd.

CLAIM

\$345,371 for concrete form work; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANTS

Flii Construction Ltd. and Conian Developments Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

West Coast Steel Ltd.

CLAIM

\$265,773 for steel products; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANTS

Concord Gardens LP and Concord Arc GP Ltd. and Concord Arc LP and Concord Gardens GP Ltd. and Centreville Construction Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Spider Holdings Ltd.

CLAIM

\$191,625 for construction services.

DEFENDANTS

1244638 B.C. Ltd. and Douglas Wilde and Scott Duncan and Nelson Williamson

PLAINTIFF

1244376 B.C. Ltd.

CLAIM

\$170,000 for debt.

DEFENDANTS

Cascade Roofing & Exteriors Inc. and Transca Vancouver W33 Ave Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Renocom Finishing Corp.

CLAIM

\$146,898 for wall cladding installation work; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANTS

Burns Lake Bottle Depot Ltd. and Wooyoung Joung aka Aiden Kai Joung and Byungock Park

PLAINTIFF

Business Development Bank of Canada

CLAIM

\$144,379 for debt.

DEFENDANT

Conian Developments (La Voda) Inc.

PLAINTIFF

TTF Scaffolding Inc.

CLAIM

\$108,161 for scaffolding, shoring, and related construction materials; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANTS

Beata Zakowicz dba Kaperon Specialized Pet Products

PLAINTIFF

Royal Bank of Canada

CLAIM

\$97,715 for debt.

DEFENDANTS

ADC Projects Ltd. and 1103 Gilston Road Holdings Inc. 1133 Millstream Ventures Ltd. and Philip Deane Garrow and Raven Michelle Fello aka Rave Michelle Garrow

PLAINTIFF

Griff Building Supplies Ltd.

CLAIM

\$75,355 for building materials; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANT

Sorin Barabulea dba Seastar Renovations

PLAINTIFF

Royal Bank of Canada

CLAIM

\$73,344 for debt.

DEFENDANT

Boundary Gold and Copper Mining Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

McMillan LLP

CLAIM

\$66,173 for legal services.

DEFENDANTS

Robin Scory and Sunset Powerlines Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce

CLAIM

\$61,885 for debt.

DEFENDANTS

Willow Spring Construction B.C. Ltd. and Aaron John Christensen and Milano Global Developments Corp. and 1164 Robson BT Holdings Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Cooper Electrical Contracting Ltd.

CLAIM

\$51,214 for light fixture supply and installation; a builder's lien.

DEFENDANT

Winterland Beverages Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Apex Packaging

CLAIM

US\$46,383 for packaging supply.

DEFENDANT

Marquis Glass Ltd.

PLAINTIFF

Garibaldi Glass Industries Inc.

CLAIM

\$42,331 for glass and related materials.

DEFENDANTS

Western Greenleaf Property Services Inc. and Scott Koo and Nicholas Kyle

PLAINTIFF

Royal Bank of Canada

CLAIM

\$39,248 for debt.

DEFENDANTS

Pierre Victor-Nugroho Tadjipramono dba Surabaya Enterprises and Lydia Yuliana

PLAINTIFF

Royal Bank of Canada

CLAIM

\$30,380 for debt.

DEFENDANTS

Tianco Investment Group Inc. and Steve di Fruscia

PLAINTIFF

Long Wang

CLAIM

Damages for breach of contract for defendants' failure to return a real estate deposit.

DEFENDANT

Hazen Colbert

PLAINTIFFS

The Corporation of the District of North Vancouver and James Hanson and James Gordon

CLAIM

Damages for defamation arising from defendant's years-long campaign of defamation and harassment of plaintiffs, falsely accusing them in vitriolic emails and other communications of corruption and incompetence.

DEFENDANTS

Qualitek Collision Ltd. and Kin Hung Chan

PLAINTIFFS

Kevin R. Stairs and Grayson Sau-Wai Sung

CLAIM

Damages for breach of contract and fraudulent misrepresentation for defendants' failure to disclose a by-law violation citation from the City of Vancouver as part of an asset purchase deal with plaintiffs.

DEFENDANTS

Cinnamon, Jang, Willoughby & Co. and Brian Peets and Peter Cha and John Henderson and Jonathan Osten and Greinder Bethell & Co. and Gregory J. Greiner and Susan Jermyn

PLAINTIFFS

Patrick Cleary and Patrick Cleary as trustee of the Patrick Cleary Family Trust

CLAIM

Damages for professional negligence arising from defendants filing improper tax returns for plaintiffs, leading to reassessments after audits by the Canada Revenue Agency.

DEFENDANTS

Branded Merch Ltd. and Keith Farr and Ray Samuels and Gurjit Khosa

PLAINTIFF

Action Athletic Wear & Crest Ltd.

CLAIM

Damages for breach of fiduciary duty and conspiracy for misuse of confidential information by former employees.

DEFENDANT

Kiros Energy Marketing ULC

PLAINTIFF

W. Robbins Consulting Ltd.

CLAIM

Damages for breach of contract for wrongful termination of a transportation services agreement.

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