



Ipsos Reid



October 2012 BC Economy Focus Groups Final Report

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Background and Methodology

This report presents the findings of ten focus groups conducted across BC in October 2012. Four groups were held in Vancouver (Oct 24 and Nov 5) and two groups were held in each of Kamloops (Oct 29), Coquitlam (Oct 30) and Prince George (Nov 1).

The main objectives of the focus groups were to gain a better understanding of why the BC economy matters to British Columbians, how it impacts at a household level, as well as to hear public priorities for the provincial government in relation to the BC economy.

A total of 80 participants took part in the focus groups sessions. Participants were paid an honorarium of \$75 for their participation.

As with all qualitative research, the focus groups were intended to be exploratory and directional in nature. The findings should not be projected to the overall population of British Columbians.

Mood of Province

The overall mood in the focus groups was split between a view that BC overall is moving in the right direction and a view that BC is moving in the wrong direction. This result mirrors both previous qualitative research and recent Ipsos Reid surveys of the BC general public.

Most right direction sentiment related to the BC economy and job opportunities. Participants said that their family and friends are able to find the type of jobs they are looking for today. Participants also thought that the BC economy is doing better than the rest of the world. Several participants elaborated that the BC economy was doing well, and would continue to do well, because of our natural resources.

Wrong direction comments were not clustered around a single problem, but mostly focused on the cost of living in BC, as well as a desire for improvements to education and health care.

Economic Concerns

Asked about their biggest economic concerns, participants were much more likely to be worried about issues related to affordability/cost of living than about the state of the overall BC economy. In the Lower Mainland, affordability concerns were highly linked to housing costs, either for renting or owning a home. In the rest of BC, affordability was also linked to housing, but also to broader costs for home heating, gas, groceries, etc.



Participants elaborated on what affordability challenges they face at a household level. Some said they have had to make tougher choices about where to vacation or whether to vacation at all. Others said they have cut back on discretionary spending for entertainment activities, kids recreation activities, home renovations, and extra spending on clothes and groceries.

BC Compared to Rest of World

Participants across all groups said the world economy is in bad shape and that BC is doing better than most other places.

Asked why BC is doing better, the top reason given was that BC has natural resources the world wants. Several participants said that it's not just being blessed with these resources, but that it's also about good management in that it takes investment, infrastructure and skills to develop these resources.

Another reason given for why BC is doing better is the province's weather and low crime, which helps to attract the best people from around the world to move/invest here.

There was also a view expressed that BC has a good head on its shoulders and hasn't gotten into debt like the rest of the world. This applies to both individual people, as well as to government.

Priorities for Future

Participants were asked what they would like to see the provincial government focus on to keep BC ahead of much of the rest of the world.

The top priority named for government is to focus on job growth. Jobs are what allow households to keep up with affordability challenges.

After jobs, the other frequently mentioned priorities included investing in skills training, good fiscal management and focusing on the environment.

Participants said investing in skills training is important to feed into good jobs, to give people hope and to keep jobs for British Columbians.

Participants described good fiscal management as controlling spending, paying down the debt and balancing the budget. There is a belief that a balanced budget means more money available for services (less for interest payments) and is a sign that BC is stable and a good place for investment. For individuals, a balanced budget is a sign that government is doing what it should be doing, which builds confidence in overall government performance.



The environment wasn't always at the top, but was generally close to the top priorities. Participants understand the need for economic development, but want the environment to be front and centre on every decision.