



NEDC STATEMENT – Read by Mayor Bill McKay, December 19, 2016

Tonight, Council wishes to inform Nanaimo's residents, businesses and industry of a decision made December 15 regarding economic development. Over the next few minutes I will outline changes to the alignment of the City's economic development function; I will reaffirm Council's support for resources and strategies that enable the growth and diversification of our community's economy; and I will emphasize Council's desire to work with individuals from across Nanaimo who serve as experts, leaders and champions in business and industry.

Last August Council approved an *Updated Strategic Plan* for the period of 2016 through 2019. Among the plan's five community values is a direct reference to economic health, and specifically, creating a vibrant culture of innovation, stewardship and partnership to encourage a healthy economy, including:

- diverse jobs that enable our residents and businesses to thrive;
- values reflecting our unique community in a changing world;
- strong partnerships and collaboration with the private sector, educational institutions, First Nations, other levels of government and other organizations;
- environmental stewardship; and
- an innovative atmosphere supporting creativity and entrepreneurialism.

Today, Council finds itself at a crossroads with respect to delivering on this community value by means of the resource created to oversee economic development – the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation. Of concern is the current standing of the NEDC's board and the status of its CEO, with the former being low on membership and

the latter being vacant for the fourth time in five years. Efforts to replace the board's membership have thus far generated only minor interest, while the work needed to replace the CEO may take up to four months.

By way of these circumstances, combined with the need to pass the 2017-2021 Financial Plan, and to expediently deliver on the economic values contained in the City's Updated Strategic Plan, Council has decided to wind down operations of the NEDC by January 31 and replace it with a commission chaired by the Mayor and supported by membership drawn from the following sectors:

- Business
- Regional government
- First Nations
- Port and airport authorities
- Post secondary education
- Construction
- Labour
- Business development

Additional members may be added with knowledge and experience related to areas such as transportation, forestry, manufacturing, healthcare, tourism, retail, professional and technical services.

To support this commission, two CUPE positions drawn from the current NEDC staff will return to the City, along with a future option to add a manager role. Operationally, these positions will enable the commission to implement its vision while relying on resources from City Hall including financial services, human resources, IT and communications. Through this integration it is expected that significant administrative savings will be made.

To date we have been informed that four remaining members of the NEDC board have expressed their interest in joining the new commission. On behalf of Council, I welcome the experience and dedication these volunteers bring as we begin the process of initiating this new delivery model. Likewise, I also wish to acknowledge past board members who, along with NEDC staff, committed their time and ideas to advancing our community's economic interests.

So, with the former NEDC board members seated, it is my immediate hope that the new commission can be initially formed and prepared to hold its first meeting in January whereby the process of providing direction to staff within the economic development group can begin.

As Mayor, I am motivated to chair this commission. My enthusiasm will be drawn from spearheading a renewed commitment to Nanaimo that demonstrates Council's desire to promote and provide a positive business environment while successfully sparking the attention and imagination of the creative and diversified industries being established around the world. In the coming weeks I will seek the involvement of the brightest and most outgoing among our community to join us in creating a business climate and savvy that's on par with Canada's most progressive cities.