

OKANAGAN PARTNERSHIP

*Enabling the Future: Implementing the
Okanagan Competitiveness Strategy*

“Everyone recognizes that the proper development of the college and the university will be key to further enhancement of the sustainable economy this region needs and wants.”

Jim Hamilton

“The Okanagan Partnership was formed to think a little ahead. To not simply follow the road to the future but to design and build that road...one that builds on the unique quality of life that we enjoy today and leaves this a better place for our children and grandchildren.”

Brad Bennett

“Our education and research will have local relevance and global significance”

Barry McBride

“The key remains for community leaders from across the Okanagan to come together and not just to talk about problems, but to begin to find solutions,” says Fitzpatrick. “In many ways the Okanagan is at the proverbial ‘fork in the road’ and doing nothing - on issues such as water, regional planning and transportation – is not an option.”

Gordon Fitzpatrick



Principles of the Okanagan Partnership

- Focusing on our future...as a “region.”
- Recognising the need to take action.
- Thinking globally and acting regionally.

Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Okanagan Partnership is to build and implement an action-focused strategy for a high performance, sustainable and prosperous regional economy. A high performance economy is achieved by building a culture of collaboration that creates distinct advantages for each of the industrial clusters that drive the region's economic portfolio.

Knowledge Services – Cluster update

Two primary objectives of the Okanagan Partnership Knowledge Services Leadership Team were the formation of a four-year engineering program at UBC Okanagan and the construction of a dedicated building to house the faculty.

The group's original priority was realized when UBC-O Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr. Barry McBride announced in the spring that an engineering program had been established and its initial enrolment for September 2005 would be 60 students. Two months ago, the university announced plans for a new building to contain the engineering faculty.

Martin Wedepohl, who co-chairs the OP Knowledge Services cluster along with Dick Fletcher, past-president of the Association of Professional Engineers in B.C., said the committee has now been redefined as an engineering advisory group.

“Our present objective is to make sure the faculty flourishes so it will stimulate economic and industrial activity in the valley,” said Wedepohl.

The Knowledge Services Team has put forward a white



paper entitled “Creating an Environment for Innovation”. Several of the suggestions are being actioned by the group. This document has been acknowledged by the administration of Okanagan College and UBC.

Okanagan Regional Network (ORNet)

A consortium of academic, industry and government leaders applied for, and received funding for a feasibility study to explore the viability of developing a regional fibre-optic broadband infrastructure backbone for the Okanagan Valley. Spearheaded and administered by the Okanagan Partnership, with leadership from Barry McBride, Vice Chancellor of UBC-O, Jim Hamilton, President of Okanagan College and business, education and community

leaders, this study is examining product options, business concepts, the market, organizational options and cost/benefit analyses. The Feasibility Study is recommending that the project steering committee begin the process of building a dedicated organization to action the feasibility and business plan. It also strongly recommends moving forward with the next steps of implementing the Okanagan Regional Network, including establishing the governance structure, preparing the preliminary engineering study and proceeding quickly with a Request For Information from potential suppliers .

Regional Water Strategy – Flagship Update

As a direct result of the deliberate work of the Partnership's Regional Water Strategy Team, significant progress has been made during the past year in addressing regional water issues - such as sustainability and allocation - in a comprehensive manner.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) has now gained the approval of the three regional districts in the valley to increase the levy for all of its users, and the surplus funds will be made available for worthy sustainability projects such as metering, detecting ground water contamination and projecting further growth.

Recently, the OBWB and members of the Okanagan Partnership met to outline specific plans for the formation of an Okanagan Water Stewardship Council. Members of the Council will be named in the near future. The Okanagan Basin Water Board will be increasing its membership to include a representative from the First Nations and will also include a member of the Stewardship Council.

“The stewardship will be a guiding hand to what the priorities should be for overseeing our finite water resources over the next several decades,” Sidon said.



Okanagan Innovation Fund

The Okanagan Partnership quickly recognized that there is a critical need for venture funding in our region. Drope says the Board of Directors overseeing the OIF is looking for business and investment opportunities, with an eye to ensuring there is a positive return on its investments. The long range plan is to increase the OIF to about \$5 million in assets.

“It was one of the outcomes we were hoping to achieve,” said John Drope, managing director of the fund. **“The Okanagan Partnership identified that there was a need for access to capital in order to strengthen our regional economy.”**

Regional Planning Flagship

The Okanagan Regional Planning Flagship Team is in the process of applying for funding to help create a long-range vision and plan for the region’s future. The multi-stakeholder group consisting of all three regional districts and Okanagan First Nations will utilize MetroQuest visioning tool as the catalyst for developing this plan. MetroQuest will help decision makers and the public see the consequences of various planning decisions as they relate to water, air, land and transportation for the Okanagan Basin.

Bringing together all of the Okanagan regional planners for the first time to collectively discuss regional planning initiative has helped shape the direction and action focused team led by Steward, Theresa Arsenault.

“All the economic cluster groups spoke of the importance of thinking regionally on matters of air quality, water availability and quality, transportation corridors and land use,” said Theresa Arsenault, steward of the planning committee. **“The regional planning flagship is helping facilitate regional initiatives in all those areas.”**

Working Together to Create a Stronger, Sustainable Okanagan

Key Needs:

- Learn to think and act regionally.
- Harness resources.
- Sustain the momentum.
- Reinforce commitment.

Okanagan Cluster Portfolio



Value-Added Agriculture



Life Sciences



Tourism



Aviation



Value-added Wood Products



Knowledge Services



Wine and Beverages



First Nation Flagship

The Okanagan Nation Alliance, as the lead agency for the First Nation Flagship of the Okanagan Partnership, continues to make significant progress to build collaborative working relationships across the Okanagan Nation (comprised of 7 member bands) as well as across cultures. Chiefs of the seven bands have endorsed the progress made by the flagship on work with the new Regional Economic Development Officers Society; the restructured Okanagan Basin Water Board; the ORAN project; and the forthcoming Regional Planning Initiative.

In addition, the First Nation flagship will soon begin work on developing a regional economic development strategy. This process will help assimilate the findings of the Okanagan Partnership Sustainable Prosperity Strategy and will be launched on January 24/25 at a third Unity Principle Conference entitled, 'Building A Sustainable Future For Our First Nation Communities'.

The last Unity Principle Conference in January 2005, launched a very active Aboriginal Tourism Committee, which has guided two groundbreaking cooperative marketing projects.

"The committee now plans to formalize an Okanagan Nation Tourism Association to showcase how Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia's (ATBC's) Blueprint Strategy may be rolled out across the province," says Chris Rowland, ONA Economic Development Officer. "And we are currently working on an exciting capital project to house the Nation's administration and tourism association with links to other programs and services being delivered by the ONA and its Economic Development Unit."

To find out more about the Unity Principle Conference or partnership opportunities with Okanagan First Nations, please call Chris Rowland, Economic Development Officer @ 470-2139.

Okanagan Valley Research and Innovation Centre



The Okanagan Valley Research and Innovation Centre (ORIC) offers the technology of the National Research Council of Canada's Dominion

Radio Astrophysical Observatory to help establish and nurture businesses in our region. ORIC, located at the Industry Partnership Facility in the observatory near Penticton, offers the Okanagan's only business incubator as well as a number of other services, including technology transfer, industry support, applied research and training. Rfind Systems Inc., a start-up company dealing with Radio Frequency Identification systems, is the first to be located in ORIC's business incubator.

Executive director Peter Haubrich said that one of the centre's most significant recent accomplishments was the appointment of a board of directors including Kathleen Wallace, Jack van der Star, Diana Groffen, Tom Landecker, Andrew Hay and Bob Bissell. **"We now have a very good board of directors from industry, government and academia," he said. "Our mission is to create high-tech jobs and sustainable economic value for the Okanagan and beyond"** said Haubrich.



OKANAGAN PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATING FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

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