

AGENDA INFORMATION☒ Regular Meeting

Date: February 28, 2022

☐ Other:

Date: _____

Dept.
ManagerGM/
Director

CAO

The District of North Vancouver

REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 15, 2022

File:

AUTHOR: Councillor Megan Curren**SUBJECT: UBCM Resolution: Beyond GDP: A Wellbeing Framework in British Columbia****RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the UBCM resolution Beyond GDP: A Wellbeing Framework in British Columbia is supported for LMLGA consideration:

WHEREAS Gross Domestic Product was never intended to be used as an indicator of a society's health or wellbeing, does not reflect Indigenous values, does not account for the health of natural systems which underpin all life, and does not account for harmful externalities including pollution and climate change impacts;

WHEREAS the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations recommended that the province adopt a Wellbeing Framework in British Columbia in the 2020 report '*Centering First Nations Concepts of Wellbeing toward a GDP-alternative Index in BC*';

AND WHEREAS 82% of Canadian respondents felt that measures beyond economic growth such as health and safety, access to education, access to clean water, time for extracurricular and leisure activities, life satisfaction, social connections, and equality of access to public services are important to their day-to-day life;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM request the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, and all relevant Ministries to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples, including the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, to transform the current Gross Domestic Product economic framework in BC into a Wellbeing Framework which centres Indigenous values, includes the health and wellbeing of all people and all species, and includes the health of natural systems which underpin all life.

¹ <https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/docs/reports/presentations/BC%20AFN%20FINAL%20PRINT%202020-11-23.pdf>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html>

REASON FOR REPORT:

Economic growth, measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is not an indicator of global human health, equity, or wellbeing, nor does it account for the short or long-term health of our finite planet. The designer of the modern GDP, Nobel Prize winning economist Kuznet, noted this in 1934 when he declared that “the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income.” GDP does not account for externalities, and does not recognize the biophysical reality that the global economy operates within a finite and closed system.

In November 2020, the British Columbia First Nations Association (BCFNA) released the Centring First Nations Concepts of Wellbeing toward a GDP-alternative Index in BC report which states that:

GDP does not include what we as Indigenous people consider essential for a “good life.” It ignores factors like a healthy environment, respect for Elders, traditional practices, health, and access to food out on the land, quality of education, the safety of children and communities, cultures, vibrant and diverse languages, and the interconnected nature of all things. According to the GDP measurement, a good life is one focused solely on the production of material goods and the growth of national income.

The Right Honourable David Johnston - PC, CC, CMM, COM, CD, FRSC, FRCPSC; Former Governor General of Canada; Former President, University of Waterloo, has stated the following:

GDP doesn't distinguish between activities that are good and those that are bad for our society. Think of GDP as a giant calculator with an addition but no subtraction button. Activities like smoking, drinking to excess, building jails and hiring police to deal with crime, destroying green lands to build sprawling subdivisions, over-harvesting our natural resources to the point of jeopardizing their sustainability, using fossil fuels that pollute our air and heat up our planet – all these activities propel GDP upward. At the same time, GDP fails to include a host of beneficial activities like the value of unpaid housework, childcare, volunteer work and leisure time, because they take place outside of the formal marketplace. Nor does it make subtractions for activities that heat up our planet, pollute our air and waterways, or destroy farmlands, wetlands, and old-growth forests. The notion of sustainability – ensuring that precious resources are preserved for future generations –doesn't enter the equation.

BACKGROUND:

Before the pandemic, the Prime Minister mandated the Honourable Mona Fortier, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, to lead work across government to better incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making and budgeting. Monitoring and reporting on a broader set of measurements, rather than just on

standard economic ones, aims to better ensure that government actions are coordinated and that decisions are evidence-based, with investments focussed on areas that have the greatest impact on Canadians' quality of life. It would also improve policy coherence, transparency, and accountability with respect to government priorities, objectives and results.

The mandate letter to the *Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance* *Mandate Letter* stated:

“Lead work within the Department of Finance, with the support of the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry as the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada, to better incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making and budgeting, drawing on lessons from other jurisdictions such as New Zealand and Scotland.”

The April 21, 2021 report: *Measuring What Matters: Toward a Quality of Life Strategy for Canada*³ addresses the significant role that all orders of government, including local governments, play in influencing Canadian's quality of life:

Provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments control or administer many of the policies, programs, and regulations with the largest direct impact on Canadians' day-to-day lives. These include health care, K-12 education, community services (e.g., policing, housing, public spaces), labour standards and many environmental levers (e.g., power generation, waste management). The role of the federal government is primarily in matters of national scope such as security (criminal law, national defence), national economic performance (e.g., financial system, intellectual property, international and internal trade) and income redistribution. However, the federal government also significantly influences other aspects of quality of life, such as the environment, health and sense of community and safety, and many other domains through transfer agreements and collaboration with the provinces and territories.

The World Health Organization's Geneva Charter for Wellbeing⁴ indicates that:

Foundations for Well-being societies provide the foundations for all members of current and future generations to thrive on a healthy planet, no matter where they live. Such societies apply bold policies and transformative approaches that are underpinned by:

- a positive vision of health integrating physical, mental, spiritual, and social well-being;*
- the principles of human rights, social and environmental justice, solidarity, gender and inter-generational equity, and peace;*
- a commitment to sustainable low carbon development grounded in reciprocity and respect between humans and making peace with Nature;*

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html#Toc61968284>

⁴ [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-geneva-charter-for-well-being-\(unedited\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-geneva-charter-for-well-being-(unedited))

- *new indicators of success beyond GDP that take account of human and planetary wellbeing and lead to new priorities for public spending; and,*
- *the focus of health promotion on empowerment, inclusivity, equity, and meaningful participation.*

The global development landscape will change if both the well-being of people and the planet become central to how success is defined. A well-being society measures success according to a different set of values than those that are dominant today and takes a long-term view. It looks beyond measures of economic activity to indicators of all the determinants of human and planetary well-being, including health in all its dimensions, health equity and the resources that will shape and safeguard the well-being of present and future generations. For people, this means everyone enjoys a long and healthy life, lived well. The way forward is to transition to more sustainable, equitable societies and to learn from countries, regions, cities, communities, and cultures – especially Indigenous cultures - how to create more sustainable and equitable societies.⁵

SUMMARY:

As stated in the BCAFN Centring First Nations Concepts of Wellbeing toward a GDP-alternative Index in BC report: A made-in-BC wellbeing index would include a broad selection of social, economic, environmental, and cultural values as seen in other countries leading this trend, and in so doing would reflect how Indigenous knowledge and the contributions that have long been understood by Indigenous individuals and communities.

A made-in BC index that transcends GDP has the potential to not only more meaningfully measure wellbeing in an Indigenous-centric way, but to improve our collective wellbeing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous British Columbians alike.

The report makes the following six recommendations:

1. Adopt a collective commitment, in lockstep with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, to a new wellbeing framework for BC.
2. Meaningfully include First Nations as central to the development and implementation of the BC wellbeing framework.
3. Mandate a shared Centre of Excellence to develop the BC wellbeing framework.
4. Examine and learn from the best practices and specific examples of Indigenous wellbeing indices in other jurisdictions.
5. Prioritize the development of data needed to support the framework.
6. Accelerate the implementation of UNDRIP principles by incorporating the BC wellbeing framework and resulting made-in BC wellbeing index into government policy, laws, and decision-making.

⁵ [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-geneva-charter-for-well-being-\(unedited\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-geneva-charter-for-well-being-(unedited))

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Options:

1. THAT the motion, as presented in UBCM Resolution: Beyond GDP: A Wellbeing Framework in British Columbia, is supported; or,
2. THAT the motion is not supported.

Respectfully submitted,



Megan Curren
Councillor

REVIEWED WITH:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Clerk's Office	_____	External Agencies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Development Planning	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Library Board	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Development Engineering	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> NS Health	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Services	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> RCMP	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Operations	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ITS	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> NVRC	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Parks	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Solicitor	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum & Arch.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilities	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate	_____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bylaw Services	_____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning	_____		

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