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British Columbia News

New economic diversification program builds more resilient rural communities

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/27775>

Local governments, First Nations and other organizations looking to strengthen their communities can apply for new funding to build capacity and diversify rural and remote economies in B.C.

The Government of B.C. is investing as much as \$33 million in 2022-23 to create the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP), which will support projects that promote economic diversification, resilience, clean-growth opportunities and infrastructure development.

“People across rural B.C. are passionate about their communities and are incredibly resilient in the face of challenges,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation. “As part of our StrongerBC Economic Plan, we’re working shoulder to shoulder with local governments and First Nations to help diversify local economies to support good, stable jobs for people for years to come.”

Communities can receive funding through three streams:

- Economic diversification – Projects that plan or implement programs, services and infrastructure to support economic development and diversification in communities with populations of 25,000 or less (maximum funding: \$1 million).
- Economic capacity – Projects that build local capacity and improve ability to support economic development and diversification in communities with populations of 2,500 or less (maximum funding: \$100,000).
- Forest impact transition – Projects that support economic recovery and diversification in affected forest-dependent communities (maximum funding: \$500,000).

“Leaders in rural and Indigenous communities across B.C. work tirelessly to build economies that provide steady employment, stable services and exciting economic opportunities for their residents,” said Roly Russell, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Development. “Our government is helping to build on this resilience through a suite of initiatives, and I’m excited to add REDIP to that list. From capacity-building to internet connectivity to enhanced and new infrastructure, we’re working with communities in every corner of the province so that people can thrive wherever they live.”

The REDIP is funded in part by \$185 million over three years from Budget 2022 to provide co-ordinated and comprehensive supports for forestry workers, industry, communities and First Nations that may be affected by restrictions on old-growth logging.

Local governments, Indigenous communities and organizations, Indigenous development corporations and not-for-profit organizations can apply for funding starting Nov. 15, 2022. A second intake will be open next year, with more information available in spring 2023.

Building resilient communities is a key action of the StrongerBC Economic Plan, helping move British Columbia forward by tackling the challenges of today while growing the economy.

Learn More:

Learn about the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/support-organizations-community-partners/rural-economic-development/redip> (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/support-organizations-community-partners/rural-economic-development/redip>)

Learn about forestry workers and community supports: <https://forestryworkersupport.gov.bc.ca/> (<https://forestryworkersupport.gov.bc.ca/>)

Learn about the Forestry Worker Supports and Community Resiliency Council and its members:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/supports-for-forestry-workers/forestry-worker-supports-and-community-resiliency-council> (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/supports-for-forestry-workers/forestry-worker-supports-and-community-resiliency-council>)

Learn about the StrongerBC Economic Plan: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/plan> (<https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/plan>)

A backgrounder follows.

Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation

Media Relations

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Backgrounders

What people are saying about the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program

Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests –

“By investing in new infrastructure and economic development projects, this program will help build more resilient forestry and rural communities. We continue to stand with workers and communities as we focus on moving past the boom-and-bust cycles of recent years and creating a sustainable future that works for people.”

Terry Teegee, Regional Chief, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations –

“Rural and remote First Nations communities are disproportionately impacted by the economic impacts of inflation, and natural resources commodity prices' volatility and fluctuating economic performance. To create secure, sustainable communities, which align with the sustainable development goals and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, investment is required. The new funding opportunities from this program will provide vital funding to First Nations communities and drive economic resilience and increase social stability.”

Doug Routley, Parliamentary Secretary for Forests –

“People working in B.C.'s forest sector have been challenged over the past few years. It's great to see our government finding new and innovative ways to help rural communities diversify their economies.”

Jen Ford, president, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) –

“In response to the significant economic challenges facing many B.C. communities, UBCM has long advocated for additional funding assistance to help local governments transition and diversify their local economies. This new program will support communities in advancing their economic aspirations.”

Gene Runtz, mayor, Village of McBride –

“Rural economic support programs that promote economic diversification, resilience, clean-economy opportunities and infrastructure development ensure that small, rural communities continue to drive the provincial economy, while adapting to climate change, recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 and weathering economic

uncertainty. These programs provide local governments with tools to improve the quality of life for residents, build community resilience and sustainability, and encourage investment in community.”

Acknowledgment

The B.C. Public Service acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We acknowledge the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit - respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.