

**EDG Bulletin Column**  
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**Recommendations from Industry Leaders**

Starting in late 2008, the downturn in the global economy affected businesses across Canada. To gauge the level of impact locally, the City of Nanaimo's Economic Development Office surveyed business owners on different factors contributing to overall business confidence including investment and staffing plans, as well as product or service demand. Although nearly 79% (816) of businesses who responded to the survey predicted their overall situation to be the same or better in one year, the Nanaimo Economic Development Group (EDG) saw the need to engage the 21% (217) who were not as confident, and identify ways to assist them. The EDG Industry Roundtable Series was created to discuss sector-specific issues and opportunities.

EDG partnered with a local stakeholder organization for each industry roundtable. Partnerships included the Mid Island Science, Technology & Innovation Council (MISTIC) for the Technology Roundtable, Tourism Nanaimo for the Tourism Roundtable, and the Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce for the Retail Roundtable. Invitations were targeted to ensure an adequate cross-representation from each sector, and a focused discussion with leaders, business owners, and decision makers. Participants were asked to discuss challenges and opportunities their respective industry was facing and to recommend ways which EDG and its community partners could assist.

Some key challenges being faced by the retail sector are reduced consumer confidence due to negative messaging in the media, and a market shift caused by the global recession. Opportunities include optimism among local businesses and the ability of small business to remain flexible. The tourism sector is facing challenge due to reduced visitation and hotel occupancy rates, but will benefit over the long-term from significant infrastructure improvements such as the airport expansion, and a cruise ship terminal. The technology sector is growing in Nanaimo, and can draw from the knowledge base at Vancouver Island University and other education institutions; however, it still struggles to attract skilled workers due to the community's former reputation and lack of promoting the community's amenities and quality of life.

EDG and its partners have undertaken some projects to address these and other issues, and will consider the complete list of recommendation when developing its 2010 workplan. In addition, EDG will continue to collaborate with stakeholder organizations to host industry roundtables in other economic sectors in the new year.

A complete copy of the Industry Roundtable Series report is available at [www.nanaimo.ca/edo](http://www.nanaimo.ca/edo), or by contacting Katie Ferland at 250-755-4465. By listening to the concerns of the business community in difficult economic times, Nanaimo strives to remain one of the most desirable, livable small communities in North America.