



SOUNDING BOARD



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Provincial government unveils plans for George Massey

INFRASTRUCTURE | A plan to replace the bottleneck is long overdue

The province has announced their decision to move forward with an 8-lane immersed tube tunnel to replace the existing George Massey crossing, at a cost of \$4.15B, with an expected completion date in 2030. The new tunnel will be located just upstream of the existing tunnel and two lanes will be dedicated to transit.

The environmental assessment process for the tunnel is expected to take approximately 3.5 years, construction is expected to begin in 2025 and to be completed by mid-2030. There will be a separated tube beside the crossing with a bi-directional multi-use path (i.e. walking/cycling), however, the technical briefing also presented findings which determined that future rail rapid

transit is not warranted.

The project will be delivered under the Community Benefits Agreement framework, however no details on cost or types of opportunities/benefits have been made available. In the technical briefing it was noted that conversations with the federal government regarding funding are ongoing.

Despite advocating for a bridge option, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade appreciates clarity on the path forward. President and CEO Bridgitte Anderson responded to the announcement, noting, “the business community has been vocal for years in advocating for a solution that will relieve congestion at this critical bottleneck and it’s imperative that all levels of government work



cooperatively to move the project forward without further delay.”

The project adds a significant amount of time and cost to the original plan - during the 2013 election campaign, the B.C. Liberals promised to replace the tunnel, proposing a 10-lane \$3.5

billion replacement bridge across the Fraser River, with completion expected in 2022. The GVBOT has historically supported a bridge option to replace the tunnel and advocated for a replacement that has the capacity to accommodate current and future traffic

volumes, that improves safety for all road users, can be implemented quickly and allows the safe movement of all cargo while minimizing the environmental impact.

The replacement of the current George Massey Tunnel has been one of the Board of Trade’s top regional infrastructure priorities for many years. The GMC is a crucial artery of that network, an important link of the Hwy 99 corridor that connects the region to the United States’ interstate highway system, Deltaport, B.C. Ferries Terminal, and YVR. As Canada’s Asia Pacific Gateway it is critical that the region of Greater Vancouver ensures well-maintained capacity and flow within the transportation network. **SB**

Canada Votes 2021 Event

ELECTION | Federal candidates will respond to GVBOT members survey

On August 15, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau requested newly appointed Governor General Mary Simon dissolve government, triggering a fall election. Canadians will go to the polls on September 20 to cast their ballots in an election that will determine who will lead the country through the next stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In partnership with Mustel Group, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is conducting a survey of members to create a clear picture of the challenges faced by business owners across the region and what action they want to see from Canada’s next government. The results of the survey will be jointly presented by GVBOT President and CEO



Bridgitte Anderson alongside Mustel Group founder Evi Mustel at the Canada Votes 2021 election event on September 14.

Representatives from all major parties will be present at the event, addressing the issues identified by the survey of members and outlining their respective priorities. Conservative Party Candidate for Coquitlam – Port Coquitlam,

Katerina Anastasiadis, NDP Candidate for New Westminster – Burnaby, Peter Julian, Liberal Candidate for North Vancouver, Jonathan Wilkinson and Green Party Candidate for Vancouver – Quadra Dr. Devyani Singh have confirmed they will be participating on behalf of their respective parties. Registration is now open on the Board of Trade website. **SB**



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COVID-19 | Proof of vaccination and border reopening top August policy developments

Border reopening and vaccine certification key to economic recovery

The month of August brought a number of fundamental policy changes in the ongoing fight against COVID-19 both here in B.C. and around the world.

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade spent months advocating for a science-based approach to reopening the U.S. border and, on August 9, the Canadian government began allowing American citizens and permanent residents currently residing in the United States, who were vaccinated at least 14 days prior, to enter Canada for non-essential travel for the first time since March 2020.

As a result, B.C. businesses that rely on American travellers were

able to safely resume operations and families were reunited, some for the first time in almost 18 months. Although this is a step in the right direction, the Federal Government must continue to work with the U.S., European Union and other international bodies working to define the new rules and required documentation for travel to ensure a coordinated and reciprocal treatment for Canadians around the world.

Two weeks after the border reopening, Premier John Horgan and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry introduced the B.C. Vaccine Card, which will be required for certain activities,



including both indoor and outdoor dining, sporting events and organized indoor events, beginning September 13. Initially, proof of only one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine will be required however by October

In the coming months, proof of vaccination will be a key component in allowing businesses to operate safely



24, individuals must be fully vaccinated to participate in these activities.

Although this is a welcome development, challenges remain, including an understanding of the rights-based considerations and the legal landscape for implementing vaccination status requirements among employees.

“It’s imperative that the provincial government works closely with business owners to ensure a seamless transition to the B.C. Vaccine Card, one that protects front-line staff, ensures the technology is widely accessible and available and is compatible with similar efforts across the country,” said Bridgitte Anderson, President and CEO of the GVBOT.

The fourth wave has brought considerable uncertainty to businesses already hard hit by the pandemic. In the coming months, proof of vaccination will be a key component in allowing businesses to operate safely and rebuilding consumer confidence. The Board of Trade will continue to advocate for policies that will protect the community, keep businesses open and speed the pandemic recovery. **SB**

LABOUR | Remote work is here to stay

The pandemic has radically shifted the work paradigm

Remote work is now part of the competitive landscape and its impact on employers and employees shouldn’t be underestimated. It is being factored into employees’ job searches and employers’ recruitment efforts.

Overall, the impact of the shift towards telework is changing the workplace. The benefits are considered so important that many Canadian employers plan to keep offering it once the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Our research team at BDC, the bank for Canadian entrepreneurs, released a report in June that found 74% of entrepreneurs plan to keep offering their employees the ability to work remotely, even once it’s safe to return to the office.

The report, What’s next for remote work? Views of Canadian businesses and employees, surveyed more than 700 small

businesses and 2,000 Canadian workers in February and March 2021 to learn about their views on remote work.

Remote work offering is part of the job process

For more than a year, many Canadian entrepreneurs had to pivot remote work to limit the spread of the virus. Most employees now expect and want remote work to continue to be offered.

When it comes to applying for a job or accepting a job, our study revealed that 54% of employees say that access to remote work will be a determining factor in their decision.

In B.C., it’s of note that 45% of employees want to work mostly remotely after the pandemic, but only one-third believe that it will be possible. In the spring, 57% of British Columbians worked at home at least some of the time.



What remote work offers to employers and employees

There are both benefits and disadvantages for employees and employers. The most important benefits to both are flexible working hours, while the main disadvantage to both is the impact on interaction normally found in offices.

- The main advantages:
- Reduced commuting time (84%)
 - Flexible working hours (62%)

- Improved life balance (58%). The main disadvantages:
- Difficult to interact informally with colleagues (53%)
- Increased screen fatigue (45%)
- Difficult not seeing colleagues at work (44%)

Benefits and disadvantages for employers

- The main advantages:
- Flexible working hours (54%)
 - Improved employee retention (35%)

- Reduced operating costs (34%)
- The main disadvantages:
- Impact on communication, interaction, and collaboration (13%)
- Teleworking not applicable to all roles (11%)
- Impact on productivity and efficiency (9%)

Remote work can help a tight labour market

Remote work can give employers the opportunity to hire qualified candidates they wouldn’t otherwise have access to geographically, an advantage in Canada’s tight labour market.

However, while remote work opens hiring opportunities to Canadian entrepreneurs, this is also true for our Southern neighbour. With labour issues beginning to weigh on both sides of the border, competition for talent can become even more intense. For that reason, entrepreneurs should definitely look into how their company can attract but also retain the workers they need.

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