

Greater Vancouver Economic Scorecard 2018

Special Lens on Regional Coordination and Governance

Background

- This year's Special Lens focuses on regional coordination and governance — topics touched upon in *Scorecard 2016* as areas of priority moving forward.
- This section evaluates the enablers of good governance in the region, examines the existing governance structures in Greater Vancouver, and highlights current issues in the region.
- The Special Lens also includes a benchmarking analysis that ranks Greater Vancouver against seven other North American metro regions on five indicators of governance.

Governance Benchmarking

This year's Special Lens benchmarks a total of eight metropolitan areas across five indicators of governance. The benchmarking measures relative strength decision-making processes and the presence of good governance enablers in the observed metropolitan areas. Greater Vancouver receives a "B" grade overall.

Methodology

- This study uses a report card-style ranking of A–B–C–D to assess the performance of metropolitan areas for each indicator and each category.
- The Conference Board of Canada assigned a grade level by calculating the difference between the top and bottom performer of each indicator and dividing the figure by four.
- A metropolitan area received a scorecard ranking of "A" on a given indicator if its score was in the top quartile, a "B" if its score was in the second quartile, a "C" if its score was in the third quartile, and a "D" if its score was in the bottom quartile.
- In the Governance Benchmarking, two indicators (Regional Economic Development Agency and Regional Transit Agency) are binary. If such a body exists the region receives a 1, and a 0 if there is no such body.

Overall Governance Ranking, Selected Metropolitan Areas

Ranking	Metropolitan Area	Grade
1	Seattle-Tacoma	A
2	Greater Vancouver	B
3	Halifax	B
4	Montréal	C
5	Toronto	C
6	San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward	C
7	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro	C
8	Calgary	D

Greater Vancouver's Governance Performance

Indicator	Grade	Ranking
Number of local governments per 100,000	C	5
Percentage of women councilors	B	4
Own-source revenues as a share of total local government revenues	A	3
Regional economic development agency	0	-
Regional transit agency	1	-

Regional Issues

Transportation: Moving people through any densely populated metro region is a challenge. As cities have grown, transportation infrastructure development, advancements in transportation technology, and a preference for single-family homes have resulted in commuters living farther from their workplaces. These commuters cross municipal boundaries, necessitating the coordination of transportation planning between jurisdictions. As such, regional transportation authorities are the preferred solution for most municipalities. In Greater Vancouver, the regional agency is TransLink.

Economic Development: There are at least 10 municipal economic development agencies operated by the 21 municipalities making up the Metro Vancouver regulatory entity, which almost certainly results in duplication of effort and unnecessary inter-jurisdictional competition. To attempt to address this duplication and bring a broader, cross-municipality focus, Metro Vancouver recently launched a Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI).

Housing Affordability: It is widely acknowledged that Greater Vancouver is facing a housing affordability crisis. The region's ratio of median house prices to median household income is one of the highest in *Scorecard 2018*. In addition, the Conference Board of Canada found that only three other competitor regions have seen a sharper deterioration in housing affordability over the past five years. Improved regulatory alignment and harmonization among the region's municipalities on the various items suggested above, especially in the building permitting process, should be effective in increasing housing supply in a timely manner.

Availability of Industrial Land: Greater Vancouver's well-known land constraints confront competing demands from residential, industrial, recreational, and agricultural users. The municipalities making up Greater Vancouver should take concerted action to collectively protect and administer industrial land. It is acknowledged that the incentive to act regionally is negated by the fragmented structure of local governance around the region (and their resulting competition for industrial activities). On the other hand, the risks to industrial land provide a good example of the case for improved regional governance and cooperation.

Important Regional Conversations

By examining the quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade recommends four discussions we need to engage in as a region to improve governance and service delivery:

1. Directly Elect Metro Vancouver's Board
2. Centralize Economic Development and Investment Promotion
3. Promote Greater Inter-Municipal Cooperation Agreements or Private Sector Outsourcing
4. Address the Imbalance Between Municipalities' Spending Responsibilities and their Ability to Raise Revenue