



A little book about
what the future might
hold for Prince George

What are scenarios?

A challenge with creating long term strategies is that the future is uncertain. In this workshop we explored uncertainties and trends that may affect Prince George in the future. The goal is to describe alternate futures for Prince George, and use these scenarios in order to “test” strategies developed in the subsequent strategy workshops.

Testing strategies against possible future scenarios ensures the strategy will work under future conditions we can predict, and allow the strategy to have a better chance to work under actual future conditions, which we can't predict.

How did we create these scenarios?

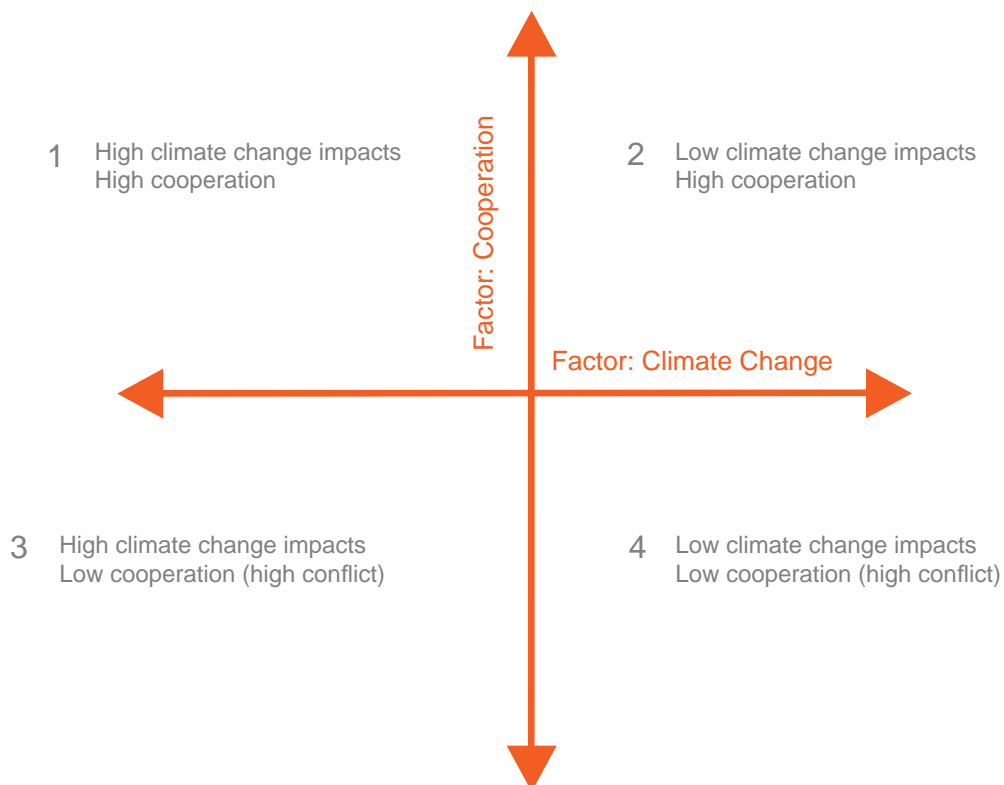
We held a 2-day workshop with a diverse group of local experts. The process was:

- **Brainstorm** different factors / future trends that could affect us.
- **Prioritize** the factors and **select** a top two that are critical to Prince George, and whose future trend is not certain.
- **Sketch** out four very different scenarios using different combinations of the two factors (i.e high to low range of each factor)
- **Create** stories by adding other previously identified factors to the mix, and developing a credible storyline that grows out of current trends.

Stories were later polished for consistency and clarity.

What two factors were chosen?

- **Climate Change** - we know there will be impacts, but don't know how severe
- **Cooperation vs Conflict** – combined ideas like globalization vs. localization, cultural homogenization, and business and intergovernmental cooperation.



Scenarios Overview

Scenario 1: Weathering the storm (High climate change impacts, High cooperation)

Sea level rise and droughts have led to mass migration and an increase in diseases that strain resources. Worldwide loss of biodiversity stresses natural systems. However, a global effort is underway to adapt to climate change. Catastrophes have led to growing cooperation, which leads to successful adaptation to climate impacts. The public have accepted lower standards of living in order to face climate related challenges. Education and communication facilitates global consciousness.

Scenario 2: An easy ride (Low climate change impacts, High cooperation)

In a highly cooperative community that has experienced slow climate impacts, self-sufficient local economies are becoming the norm, as developing countries grow and compete for resources. Interest and participation in civic governance is high because of a focus on education and global connectivity. A move to more compact communities to address seniors' needs and keep them active has led to lower health care costs. Traditional and local knowledge are shared and valued as young and old work together toward local food security.

Scenario 3: Overwhelmed by global shifts (High climate change impacts, Low cooperation [high conflict])

Developing countries strengthen their economies through education and a focus on technological development. By contrast, North America has lost the ability to fund universities and loses prominence. Plagued by climate change impacts, North America has taken on a fortress mentality, hoarding food and pushing for the production of dirty and expensive fuel. Many citizens lose their homes to sea level rise, others lose family to severe weather storms. Massive migration to the interior causes conflict over food resources.

Scenario 4: Rising costs, rising conflict (Low climate change impacts, Low cooperation [high conflict])

Growth of developing countries and an aging population lead to higher energy and health costs, putting pressure on government and household finances. Constrained public funding then leads to privatization of education, healthcare and other services. While the alternative energy sector bears fruit for some in the region, the poor and lower middle class are hardest hit by these changes. As a result, disparity rises and catalyses widespread conflict.

How do we use the scenarios?

The scenarios will be used as test cases to spark discussion and expand our thinking in order to improve the robustness of the draft strategies in the sustainability plan.

Developing a long-term sustainability plan means grappling with an uncertain and complex future. By considering how well a strategy would work in a range of scenarios, this process ensures that our strategies will achieve our shared vision no matter what actually happens, and can build consensus.

What will Prince George need to do to thrive in these different scenarios?

Risk responses common to all scenarios

- Proactively mitigate climate impacts on forests, and from flooding
- Proactively address high energy costs
- Lay foundations for growing local agriculture
- Take advantage of communications technology
- Build partnerships with other governments and business in key areas

Risk responses unique to individual scenarios

Weathering the storm

- Urgent focus on emergency response capacity
- Anticipate significant migration from other countries
- Anticipate a shift to a less materialist culture

An easy ride

- Anticipate low population growth
- Pursue initiatives for compact development

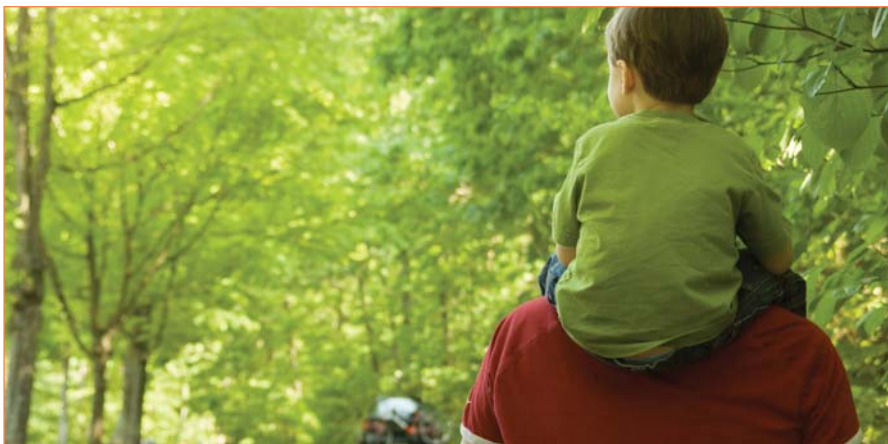
Overwhelmed by global shifts

- Target diversification beyond forestry, education
- Anticipate influx of refugees from other countries and potential for racism

- Anticipate possible competition for transportation from the NW Passage
- Become more self-reliant for food and other basic necessities - build capacity for autonomy

Rising costs, rising conflict

- Proactively reduce poverty and inequity
- Avoid physical segregation of communities, sub-cultures
- Anticipate growing fiscal pressure on government and households
- Reduce differences between private and public service delivery
- Integrate cultural groups
- Develop a culture of environmental stewardship



Scenario 1

(High climate change impacts, High cooperation)

March 1, 2040

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Weathering the storm



Sea level rise and droughts have led to mass migration and an increase in diseases that strain resources. Worldwide loss of biodiversity stresses natural systems. A global effort is underway to adapt to climate change. Catastrophe leads to growing cooperation, which leads to successful adaptation to climate impacts. The public have accepted lower standards

of living in order to face climate related challenges. Education and communication facilitates global consciousness.



The story since 2010:

2010 - 2020 Foundations of global, local cooperation

- **“Increasing frequency of natural disasters creates global concern”**
- **“Local food movement strengthens”** - after two hot seasons ruin import crops from equatorial countries and California.
- **“Virtual cooperative nations”** - community networking using communication technology increases, supporting cultural understanding, fostering local and global cooperation.
- **“Small is powerful”** - small communities become engaged in taking back responsibility and control. Small municipalities and their regional partners move to a consensus model.
- **“Prince George D.A.R.T. team aids in response to California forest fire”**
- **“Partnerships for clean energy”** - business and government partnerships on clean, local energy are fostered by a Provincial mandate to reduce emissions.

Cont'd scenario 1: Weathering the storm

2020 - 2030 Culture of cooperation emerging, managing change

- **“Droughts, floods and fires, Oh my!”** - extended droughts lead to migration from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Canadian programs are spawned to integrate influx.
- **“New pests infiltrating the forest”** - continued warming gives rise to new pests affecting different tree species, increasing fire risks.
- **“Local schools connect to African schools”** - improved communication technology offers flexibility in how schools and businesses function and locate. Education focuses on global effects of living beyond means.
- **“Consolidated disaster response”** - cooperation among D.A.R.T., Engineers without Borders, Habitat for Humanity etc to reduce number of people and businesses in floodplains, manage risk of fires.
- **“Devolution to municipalities”** - allows local governments to create district energy systems. Partnerships with local businesses support the design of infrastructure to mimic natural systems.
- **“Cost of living rises”** - people begin to reduce consumption, moving to more local and durable purchasing practices.
- **“BC adopts proportional voting”** - legislation is more mixed with coalition governments.

2030 - 2040 Institutionalized cooperation, adaptation success

- **“Bangladesh is gone - influx of refugees to use up all food surplus - Russia to ship in grains”**
- **“No war, only rescue”** - Natural disasters become the norm, military completely focused to response.
- **“Intergenerational holistic approaches to knowledge furthers global consciousness”** - aided by the increase in global communication
- **“Global reciprocity fund reaches 5% of world GDP”** - fund institutionalized.
- **“Cooperatives abound”** - BC has a strong knowledge-sharing network with local agricultural, forestry and bio-energy cooperatives and is adapting new solutions for food crops.
- **“Canada becomes concensus-based”**

March 1, 2040

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An easy ride



In a highly cooperative community that has experienced slow climate impacts, self-sufficient local economies are becoming the norm, as developing countries grow and compete for resources. Interest and participation in civic governance is high because of a focus on education and global connectivity. A move to more compact communities to address seniors' needs and keep

them active has led to lower health care costs. Traditional and local knowledge are shared and valued as young and old work together toward local food security.



The story since 2010:

2010 - 2020 BRIC rise brings local and global strengthening

- **“BRIC rise”** - with climate impacts slow to appear, Brazil, Russia, India and China economies grow.
- **“Canada and China heal wounds”** - Canadian and Chinese trade relations and cooperation improve.
- **“Technology for all”** - BRIC’s high communications productivity results in more affordable access to technologies.
- **“The world is one click away”** - education and communication technologies actively link countries, supporting cultural understanding.
- **“Exploding senior’s market”** - province, municipalities and developers create joint strategy for accessible compact neighbourhoods to address market.
- **“Is there enough?”** - concerns over global competition for food and energy with BRIC countries result in an increased interest in local production.
- **“Growing civic movement”** - community sustainability meetings gain momentum as citizens take active interest in shaping their futures.

Cont'd scenario 2: An easy ride

2020 - 2030 Increasing education and labour opportunities

- **“BRIC needs Canada”** - continuing BRIC growth creates strong demand for energy and food. As a result, Canada increases exports of food and energy.
- **“Together at the table”** - local food production increases and the growing season is slowly increasing in the west, contributing to its competitiveness. Food programs become common in school, and senior's are actively sought to contribute to knowledge transfer, building institutional capacity.
- **“Satellites bring education to everyone”** - remote communities and lower income families have better access than ever to the world wide web. Web-based educational programming increases.
- **“Hook it up”** - district energy systems become more commonplace, supported by the movement for compact communities. Communities are also increasing physical activity because of walkability.
- **“Agriculture boost brings jobs”** - rural, resource communities abound with jobs for locals. Demand for labour brings new migrants to many slow-growing communities.
- **“Citizen voices matter!”** - cultural and intergenerational respect are fostered through prioritized civic engagement policy at municipal and provincial levels. Spaces are actively created for virtual and real-time dialogue among citizens.

2030 - 2040 Decade for health and compassion

- **“Federal policy encouraging migrants to rural centres”** - international migration is low as BRIC countries retain labour force.
- **“Health costs fall”** - Canadians are experiencing better health as populations get younger and communities become more compact, increasing physical activity and supporting alternative energy sources. Abundance of local, organic foods contributes significantly.
- **“Community gardens flourish”** - a decline in corporate food producers and their processes occurs as the local food movement gains momentum.
- **“We take care of each other”** - homelessness has decreased significantly with new job sources and increased dialogue. It's a decade of compassion.

Scenario 3

(High climate change impacts, Low cooperation [high conflict])

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Sea levels rise dramatically!

Overwhelmed by global shifts

Developing countries strengthen their economies through education and a focus on technological development. By contrast, North America has lost the ability to fund universities, lose prominence. Plagued by climate change impacts, North America has taken on a fortress mentality, hoarding food and pushing for the

production of dirty and expensive fuel. Many citizens lose their homes to sea level rise, others lose family to severe weather storms. Massive migration to the interior causes conflict over food resources.



The story since 2010:

2010 - 2020 The dumbing down of North America

- **“No decision at Copenhagen”** - nations don't agree on climate response.
- **“Harper announces Arctic Sovereignty Initiative”**
- **“China buys waste from North America to produce energy”**
- **“Research funding cuts at N.A. universities”** - anti-intellectualism movement having biggest impact on rural universities.
- **“BRIC continues to lead way in research”** - Brazil, Russia, India and China gain strength as economies grow.
- **“India provides universal education”**
- **“Hoarding our food”** - strong move to protect agricultural land from development and produce from export to anticipate later crisis.

Cont'd scenario 3: Overwhelmed by global shifts

2020 - 2030 Climate change hits home

- **“Arctic sea ice hits all time low”** - affects transportation/logistics, shipping through northwest passage begins to compete with rail to eastern markets.
- **“Severe US/China/African drought”** - food production drops while demand increases, global instability becomes obvious in the face of food scarcity.
- **“Rise in local food production”** - higher temperatures and precipitation in the region enhance soil and improve agriculture.
- **“U.N. collapses over security council divide”** - international conflict driven by an influx of climate refugees to urban centres, the loss financial centres in different parts of the world.
- **“Lower Mainland half underwater”** - regional conflicts escalate over scarce resources as population increases in the interior are felt.
- **“Arctic oil showdown”**
- **“North America hungry”** - economy is back to Cold War-style depression
- **“Canada turns back on low carbon economy”** - while some countries are instituting carbon taxes and a shift to a low carbon economy, Canada leverage the high fuel prices to produce oil and gas, ever dirtier

2030 - 2040 BRIC takes the lead

- **“India and China are leading as technology giants”** - shifting economy
- **“Bangladesh and New York under water”** - sea levels rise dramatically and massive migration continues inland.
- **“Northwest passage navigable year-round”** - now the primary route to ship goods from Asia to eastern North America.
- **“Mysterious illness kills hundreds of thousands”** - international air travel cancelled. China first to vaccine; India on its heels.
- **“Living conditions decline rapidly”** - depression and sense of loss in North America as they struggle to comprehend their decline in power
- **“China calls U.S. debt”** - sends U.S. economy into further decline
- **“Russia beats Canada to Arctic Oil”** - oil sands are running dry and natural gas deposits in ocean expensive to tap. Interest in bio-energy faces issues with dying, diseased wood stock.
- **“Russia announces 85% literacy rate”; “India redirects space-generated solar energy”**

Scenario 4

(Low climate change impacts, Low cooperation [high conflict])

March 1, 2040

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Rising costs, rising conflict



Growth of developing countries and an aging population lead to higher energy and health costs, putting pressure on government and household finances. Constrained public funding leads to privatization of education, healthcare and other services. While the alternative energy sector bears fruit for some in the region, the poor

and lower middle class are hardest hit by these changes. Disparity rises to widespread conflict.



The story since 2010:

2010 - 2020 Rising costs and tradeoffs

- **“Oil hits \$5/litre”** - climate impacts are slow to appear, and Brazil, Russia, India and China economies grow, creating strong demand for energy and raising its cost.
- **“Healthcare hits 75% of provincial budget”** - BC’s aging population demands healthcare funding, putting pressure on all other provincial services. As a result, education funding and funding to support enforcement of environmental regulations suffers significantly.
- **“Communities forced to take on more responsibility”** - responding to fiscal pressures, Provincial and Federal governments continue to download responsibilities on municipalities. This, along with rising local services and road maintenance costs, lead to higher taxes.
- **“Region’s first major geothermal building”** - sensing a competitive opportunity, a local developer responds to high energy costs and attracts local consumers willing to pay more for “green”.

Cont'd scenario 4: Rising costs, rising conflict

2020 - 2030 Transition to inequity

- **“Northern BC leads bio-energy production”** - demand for energy catalyzes growth in this sector, supporting economic growth and migration (national & international). Added municipal tax revenue helps offset tax increases, delaying hard decisions about budget priorities.
- **“Energy sector draws skilled migrants”** - educated, international migrants move in to high quality neighbourhoods. Middle class able to maintain consumer lifestyles despite slowly rising costs.
- **“Private seniors care dominates - poor out in the cold”** - rich seniors move to exclusive, super-secure neighbourhoods where private companies offer healthcare and spa services. Other seniors are faced with deteriorating housing and poor access to shops and services.
- **“Quality in public education drops”** - as a result of government funding reductions. Private education becomes a refuge for the rich, creating disparity in education. Private religious schools also grow, contributing to widening cultural divisions.
- **“No way out - poverty spiralling”** - energy costs and high taxes still affect the poor and lower middle class, stretching household finances. Houses in poorer neighbourhoods degrade as owners are unable to maintain them.
- **“Rise in gangs”** - as impoverished, under educated and poorly housed youths become frustrated and lose confidence in the government. Racial tensions with migrants rise.

2030 - 2040 Rising conflict

- **“Retrospective: The rise of gated communities in Northern BC”** - the rich congregate in secure, high amenity enclaves. There are obvious differences between neighbourhoods as municipal government focuses funds on areas where political support is strong.
- **“Bio-energy fueling the rich”** - the boom of this sector begins to fade as energy sources become less abundant due to over-production and the new pests, prosperity is concentrated in the upper class. Poorer households reduce energy use to reduce costs.
- **“It's not safe out there”** - the seeds of conflict bear further fruit, fundamentalist religious groups clash, gangs gain power with religious groups demanding government action.

Appendix: Summary of External Factors

As mentioned in the introduction above, a list of factors/future trends that could affect us was generated through a group brainstorm on day one of the workshop. Development of this list was assisted by feedback gleaned from the myPG Envisioning phase survey (question 5) and an online Ideascale survey posted on the myPG website.

Through a voting process the top 5 factors were prioritized based on those that are **critical to Prince George**, and whose future trend is not certain. From there, two were chosen for the scenario development because they were viewed as the **most important and uncertain**.

The two chosen factors were Climate Change (we know there will be impacts, but don't know yet how severe they will be (e.g. a 2-5 deg C rise is the range of uncertainty for PG), and Cooperation – how cooperative or conflictual we will be (from the global scale to the local). The second factor combined ideas like globalization vs. localization, cultural homogenization, and business and intergovernmental cooperation. The remaining three factors were considered in light of the two main ones during scenario development.

	Category	Factor
Top 5	Environment	Climate Change
	Political	Growing conflicts as a result of resource security and power shifts
	Technical	Losing culture, social skills, human contact
	Economic	India, China, Russia, Brazil rise at expense of us
	Social	Cultural erosion due to globalization



	Category	Factor
Ntext 20 Most Important	Economic	Rapidly shifting regional economy due to climate change, globalization
	Social	Loss of local knowledge and low-tech skills
	Political	Need for local food
	Environment	Climate induced migration
	Economic	Rising costs energy, including transportation costs
	Environment	Sustainable development becomes conflict between developed/developing countries
	Social	Degradation of social services
	Technology	Communications technology – faster, off-grid – leads to decentralization, quality of life becomes key
	Environment	Zero waste movement (manufacturing) – cradle to cradle
	Economic	Water, food security, energy dominate world markets
	Economic	People, businesses, and governments are doing more long-term thinking
	Environment	Degradation of air, land, water
	Economic	Localization
	Political	Global instability
	Political	Political partisanship – driven by economic disparity and locks down decisions
	Tech	Lower environ standards due to international competition
	Social	Post-materialist values
	Economic	Fall in US economy – unrest
	Economic	Consumers use less/more stuff (post-materialism)
	Economic	Aging – fewer workers – pressure on economy



	Category	Factor
	Political	Power of corporations
	Political	Commodification of water/natural resources
	Political	Immigration pressures due to resource security
	Tech	'Appropriate' tech movement
	Social	Rich becoming more sustainable at expense of developing nations
	Social	Growth in local community
	Economic	Shift to bioenergy/alternatives
	Environment	Divide between urban/south and rural/north environmental values
	Environment	Environmental laws are stronger where impacts are visible
	Political	Citizen apathy – tyranny
	Political	Community/local growing
	Tech	Centralization of knowledge, info-disempowers
	Social	Mix of cultures
	Social	Literacy disparity increasing
	Social	Community values
	Economic	Globalization (economy, tech/resources, networks)
	Environment	Mass extinction
	Political	Dissolution of US/Cdn body (Cascadia)
	Political	BC FN ratify treaties
	Political	Global interdependence
	Political	Protectionism
	Political	Inter-nation stabilization of financial systems
	Tech	Genetic industry – growing impact
	Tech	Biomimicry
	Tech	Need high tech to compete
	Tech	Culture is homogenizing globally – computers help communicate and share
	Tech	Rethink of uses for wood – ie. replace plastics
	Tech	Nuclear energy re-embraced
	Social	Virtual crime
	Social	Losing full access to recreation, education

	Category	Factor
	Social	Seniors supporting seniors
	Social	Reconceptualize health and wealth
	Social	Changing family structure
	Social	Aging here and younger internationally
	Social	Desire for authenticity
	Economic	US decline in purchasing power and Chinese etc. rise
	Economic	Global inequity
	Economic	Economic value of personal relationships
	Economic	National debt rising
	Environment	Pressure of development in natural spaces
	Environment	Cost of environmental impacts
	Environment	Resource company survival leads to unsustainable business practice/resource extraction (economics drives ecology)
	Environment	Carbon trading – positive results
	Environment	Higher awareness among consumers
	Environment	Perceptions of nature – dominate/master vs fear/restrict
	Environment	Weak/Strong environmental ethic drives research
	Political	Canadian-US closeness
	Political	Growth of terrorism – security/civic rights
	Political	Political support of limits to growth
	Political	Privatization of Prov/Fed services (resources, social sectors)
	Political	China – democracy
	Political	Religious fundamentalism – affects politics
	Political	Stranger central gov'ts
	Political	Foreign powers controlling debt
	Political	Western separation
	Political	Federal to prov power shift
	Political	Focus away from Ontario
	Political	Cdn international reputations tarnished
	Tech	Availability of info – empowers and accountability

	Category	Factor
	Tech	Tech more accessible and cheaper
	Tech	Cars – greener, low-impact, small
	Tech	Move to low-tech/slow movement
	Tech	Shift from resource economy – info econ
	Tech	Fast communications avail to third world – cheap
	Tech	Small scale, high-tech (greenhouses)
	Tech	Health tech – pop’n growth
	Tech	Virtual experience – less travel
	Tech	Robotics helping with health care
	Tech	Automation of manufacturing – changes location needs
	Tech	Options and info give us moral decisions
	Tech	Increase productivity and safety
	Social	Rise of gangs, new family
	Social	Family/house size disconnect
	Social	Loss of human biodiversity
	Social	Lack of services to support families
	Social	Increasing sense of individual rights
	Social	Intergenerational tension vs. baby boomers
	Social	Services centralizing regionally
	Social	Popn – global max
	Social	Quality of life key
	Social	Urbanization
	Social	Pandemics
	Social	Int’l connectivity – Haiti
	Social	Agile, technologically-connected advocates
	Social	Addictions etc.
	Social	Loss of sense of place
	Social	Dependence on technology
	Social	Immigration policy drives diversity in smaller communities
	Social	Breakdown of families and social fabric

	Category	Factor
	Social	Perception of crime
	Social	Shift to valuing sustainability
	Social	Resurgence of spirituality
	Social	Shift away from organized religion
	Economic	India, China draw brains for Can.
	Economic	Increase in consumer debt levels and real estate
	Economic	Movement of goods/people, E-W, N-S
	Economic	Cdn timber costs include full-costs
	Economic	Cdn-Russia timber
	Economic	Increase in global labour costs
	Economic	AB increasing power
	Economic	Global corporatization
	Economic	Cost of information falls
	Economic	Recession continues or gets worse
	Economic	Outsourcing industry/tech/liability (or opposite)
	Economic	More concentrated global trading, more local economy
	Economic	Destabilize dominant currencies
	Economic	Carbon market rise
	Economic	Commodity prices/resource scarcity
	Economic	Developing countries independent
	Economic	Developing countries interdependent
	Economic	Urban housing costs higher than in small centres
	Economic	More money for emergency response
	Economic	Decline of middle class
	Environment	Ability to predict weather decreases
	Environment	Potential anti-environment groups
	Environment	Response to CC and disasters are a resource drain (conflict with other demands)
	Environment	Wildlife, habitat shifting geographic
	Environment	Flood, draught, glacial melt