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Exploring Economic Benefits of Sister Cities: Prince George and Jiangmen

The City of Prince George is advancing its twinning relationship with the City of Jiangmen, which is situated in the southern China province of Guangdong. The economic benefits and opportunities created through such cooperative arrangements are substantial. The economic benefits can include an increase in tourism, educational and cultural exchanges, and trade between the two cities.

Did you know?

In Canada there are over 250 sister cities relationships. In BC there are over 40 sister cities relationships.

The city of Jiangmen is thriving on strong manufacturing and energy sectors. The City plans to enhance its paper-making and paper products, textile and chemical fibres, clean energy, electronic information, and midstream and downstream petrochemicals industries. Apart from these industries, there are several major engineering and construction projects that are underway which provide economic opportunities for Prince George based professional and scientific engineering services industries.

Initiatives Prince George has completed a study to provide local businesses with information about how they can benefit from the sister city relationship being pursued between Prince George and Jiangmen. The study identifies potential products and services that can be exported from Prince George to Jiangmen as well as educational and cultural benefits for both cities. Some of the products that are identified in the study include:

- Lumber
- Wood engineered products
- Environmental, engineering design, and architectural services
- Wood pellets
- Dairy and honey
- Perishable goods - (fruits, nuts, vegetables, seafood, and meats)
- Pulp and paper
- Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

The sister city relationship between Prince George and Jiangmen can focus on education, culture, trade, tourism and sport. Cultural and commercial benefits are not mutually exclusive; enhancing cultural, sporting and educational exchanges will promote commercial exchange over the longer term.

Did you know?

A company in US was awarded a contract worth \$1 billion to design a theme park in China as a result of a sister city relationship.

The study also outlines marketing and communication strategies for local businesses to take full advantage of the sister cities arrangement. Several business promotion organizations are identified that will play a significant role in the realization and implementation of strategies. More information and this report is available on our website (www.initiativespg.com).

Economic Statistics

Employment

The number of people employed in Prince George surpassed 50,000 in March 2014 for the first time since November 2012. There were 50,100 people employed in February, up 200 from 49,900 in February. There was a slight decline in the number of people in the workforce from 53,100 in February to 53,000 in March. There was also a decline in the unemployment rate in Prince George to 5.5% during March; this is in contrast to an unemployment rate of 6.0% in February. In BC, the number of full time jobs increased significantly by 10,300 and part-time by 8,000 in March 2014. This led to a lower unemployment rate of 5.8%, decreased from 6.4% in February. Employment in the public sector increased by 13,500 and by 14,400 in the private sector, while the number of self-employed declined by 9,600. Employment rates in BC and across Canada were 59.8% and 61.7%, respectively, while Prince George was significantly higher than both at 71%. In contrast to the provincial (5.8%) and national (6.9%) unemployment rate, Prince George remained below both at 5.5%.

(Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey)

Real Estate

30 newly constructed single detached houses were sold in March 2014 at an average price of \$434,066. This was in comparison to 37 houses sold at an average price of \$449,637 in March 2013. Home sales in Northern BC totaled 360 units in March, up 27% from March 2013. The average home price in March was a record \$261,800, up almost 13% on a year-over-year basis. The total value of properties sold was \$94.2 million in March 2014, up 43% compared to March 2013. National home sales were up slightly by 1% between February and March 2014, and the average price rose by 6% on a year-over-year basis in March.

(Source: BC Northern Real Estate Board; Canadian Real Estate Association)

Housing Construction

There were 3 housing starts in Prince George during March 2014 (all single family dwellings), which represents no change from February 2013. There were 10 single-detached residential houses completed in March 2014 compared to 14 in 2013 during the same period. The total number of housing starts in BC during March 2014 was up 8.1% compared to March 2013.

(Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)

Building Permits

The City of Prince George issued 41 building permits valued at \$4.4 million in March 2014. The value of permits issued was down by 10.2% compared to the same month in 2013; the number of permits issued in March 2014 was up 70% compared to same period last year.

(Source: City of Prince George; Statistics Canada)

Business Licenses

The City of Prince George received 4 new business license applications in December 2013 (2 new and 2 renewals). This was down from 15 applications in November. The City approved 324 business licenses in December 2013³.

(Source: City of Prince George)

Airport Passenger Volumes

39,042 passengers moved through the Prince George Airport in March 2014, 10% more than in March 2013. Year-to-date traffic is up by 4.4%. Traffic through the Vancouver International Airport was up 6.7% for the month of February 2014, in comparison to January 2013. Year-to-date passenger traffic through the Vancouver airport remained significantly up by 7.8%⁴.

(Source: Prince George Airport Authority and Vancouver Airport Authority)

³January-March business license statistics for Prince George were unavailable at the time of publication

⁴March Vancouver air traffic statistics were unavailable at the time of publication