

Fort St. John & District Chamber of Commerce - In Business for Business



Dr. Richard Florida addresses the B.C. Energy Conference in Fort St. John. Erica Fisher

Industry needs to tap into workers' creative energy: Dr. Richard Florida

Day two of the 2013 B.C. Energy Conference in Fort St. John wrapped up Wednesday night with a banquet and keynote address by Doctor Richard Florida, a professor and best-selling author. Florida told the crowd of industry leaders and politicians about what he calls the “Creative Class”, and stressed the importance of tapping into the inner creativity of workers.

“That’s the challenge of our time to make sure that each and every one of our children, each and every one of our residents, each and every one of our workers from agriculture, to resources, to energy, to knowledge, and even to those many more who work in services, can use their creativity and [innovation] to the fullest extent to make themselves an honest wage and make our communities greater.”

Approximately one-third of Canadians work in the Creative Class, which includes occupations like engineers and researchers and has really only surged in the past 30 years. In the energy sector in northeast B.C., they’re the people working on new natural gas drilling technologies and making processes more efficient.

While Florida admits that bigger cities can have an advantage in a “knowledge resource” economy”, but argues that smaller communities like Fort St. John can compete, as it’s connected to cities around the world through its resource industry.

“You might not be the biggest spike, but you are a spike of this new knowledge resource economy,” he says. “Building up those knowledge institutions, optimizing those connections to external places as you are doing, making sure you’re not isolated, but you’re connected through trades flows and people flows, and engaging in part of a bigger economy.”

That’s kept up by following two keys to success: natural amenities like green spaces and embracing a community’s own history, which Florida argues should be used as an economic strategy.

“How do you tap into that feeling of energy, that quality of place? Those are the things that people resonate with,” he notes. “Smaller communities in more rural areas that were prospering figured out how to use their amenities to their advantage. They figured out how to create a lifestyle of living.”

The Energy Conference concludes today with further discussion on pipelines, natural gas for transportation and Aboriginal energy opportunities.

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