



## 'THE REALITY CHECK IS IN THE MAIL'

CEO Iain Black on the new taxes and cost increases facing B.C. businesses in 2019

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# SOUNDING BOARD



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GREATER VANCOUVER BOARD OF TRADE AND ITS MEMBERS | FEBRUARY 2019 | VOLUME 59 / ISSUE 2 | BOARDOFTRADE.COM

# Board of Trade to host President Barack Obama

**SPECIAL SPEAKER** | Sold-out GVBOT event will take place March 5 at Vancouver Convention Centre West

The 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, is coming to Vancouver next month for a special event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

The sold-out event, entitled A Conversation with President Barack Obama, will take place at the Vancouver Convention Centre West on March 5.

"At this moment in history, President Obama is quite possibly the most coveted speaker in the world. Repeatedly, his name has topped our Member surveys as the individual that B.C. business leaders most want to hear from. For those reasons — and many more — we are ecstatic to welcome President Obama to our city on March 5," said Lori Mathison, Chair of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

"It is an honour for our organization to host one of the most respected world leaders in recent history, in light of his lifelong dedication to principled diplomacy and creating a more equal



society," added Hon. Iain Black, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

Few presidents have walked a more improbable path to the White House. Born in Hawaii to a mother from Kansas and a father from Kenya, Obama was raised with help from his grandparents, whose generosity of spirit reflected their Midwestern roots. The homespun values they instilled in him, paired with his innate sense of optimism, compelled Obama to devote his life to giving every child, regardless of his or her background, the same chance America gave him.

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States, winning more votes than any candidate in history. He took office at a moment of crisis unlike any America had seen in decades — a nation at war, a planet in peril, the American Dream itself threatened by the worst economic calamity since the Great Depression.

And yet, despite all manner of

political obstruction, Obama's leadership helped rescue the economy, revitalize the American auto industry, reform the health care system to cover another 20 million Americans, and put the country on a firm course to a clean energy future — all while overseeing the longest stretch of job creation in American history.

On the world stage, Obama's belief in America's indispensable leadership and strong, principled diplomacy helped wind down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, decimate al Qaeda and eliminate the world's most wanted terrorists, shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program, open up a new chapter with the people of Cuba, and unite humanity in coordinated action to combat a changing climate.

In times of great challenge and change, President Barack Obama's leadership ushered in a stronger economy, a more equal society, a nation more secure at home and more respected around the world. SB



### Avoiding the crunch

GVBOT plans first-ever Workforce and Employment Forum to address looming labour shortage in B.C.

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Air Canada announced as the Board of Trade's newest Pillar Partner at 30th annual Economic Outlook Forum

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# 2 EVENTS AND SPEAKERS

## COMMUNITY | Air Canada takes flight as a Pillar Partner

New agreement unveiled at 30<sup>th</sup> annual Economic Outlook Forum

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is excited to announce a new Pillar Partnership with Canada's largest domestic and international airline, Air Canada.

The announcement was made in front of hundreds of B.C. business leaders at the Board of Trade's 30th annual Economic Outlook Forum on Jan. 18.

"We are thrilled to welcome Air Canada as our organization's newest Pillar Partner," said Hon. Iain Black, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "Their support enables our organization to deliver important public policy work and provide our Members with unique and robust Member programming."

Pillar Partners are special relationships that are customized to the individual needs of the partners and defined by a minimum-commitment, multi-year arrangement. Air Canada is also the Global Airline Partner of World Trade Centre Vancouver, a subsidiary of the Board of Trade that focuses on helping businesses in British Columbia export their products and services to new markets abroad.



"Air Canada is proud to become a Pillar Partner of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, further strengthening our relationship with this influential business organization. Our commitment to serving Greater Vancouver is demonstrated every day by our more than 4,500 employees in the region, and by the development of our commercial trans-Pacific hub at YVR launching up to 1,293 flights globally each week, representing more than \$5 Billion worth of aircraft assets dedicated to the YVR market every day," said Ferio Pugliese, Senior

Vice President, Regional Markets and Government Relations at Air Canada. "Supporting other businesses contributes to further economic growth, and Air Canada's range of corporate programs and partnership in the World Trade Centre – Vancouver's Trade Accelerator Program all support the travel requirements for companies throughout our far-reaching and expanding global network."

The Board of Trade's five Pillar Partners include TELUS, CN, the Vancouver Airport Authority, the British Columbia Institute of Technology, and Air Canada. **SB**

## EMPLOYMENT | Avoiding the labour crunch

GVBOT to host first-ever Workforce and Employment Forum on March 12



Across the Greater Vancouver region and around British Columbia, businesses of all sizes are reporting capacity constraints primarily as a result of a fully utilized workforce.

Employers are regularly dealing with labour and skill shortages due to a variety of factors playing out in our economy. With low unemployment and widespread growth across various occupations and sectors, there could soon be unprecedented pressure on our already tight labour market.

This pressure will be amplified by major projects on the horizon for our region and province, including the LNG Canada project, Site C, Roberts Bank Terminal 2,

the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, Broadway Millennium Line Extension, rapid transit into Surrey and Langley, the Massey Tunnel Replacement, and more.

On March 12, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade will host its first-ever Workplace and Employment Forum, with a theme of "Avoiding the Crunch."

Join labour market experts as they discuss projections for the regional and provincial workforce, examine industry sectors and occupations facing acute pressures, and explore possible solutions to help our province "avoid the crunch." **SB**

Registration is now open at [boardoftrade.com/workforce](http://boardoftrade.com/workforce).

### UPCOMING EVENTS

See our full events calendar at [boardoftrade.com/events](http://boardoftrade.com/events)

Is there a speaker you'd like to hear from or topic you'd like explored? Make a suggestion at [boardoftrade.com/suggest](http://boardoftrade.com/suggest)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2019

Signature Programs

#### Unconscious Bias Series: Overcoming Bias for Career Success

7 – 9 a.m.

Fairmont Hotel Vancouver  
900 West Georgia Street

**Anne-Marie Pham**

Director, Knowledge Solutions  
Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion

**Event Sponsor:** Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

**Community Sponsor:** TELUS

**Presented in partnership with:** World Trade Centre Vancouver

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2019

#### Taking the Lead: Airbnb and Healthy Tourism in Vancouver

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Vancouver Club  
915 West Hastings Street

**Chris Lehane**

SVP Policy and Communications  
Airbnb

**Presenting Sponsor:** Airbnb

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

#### Members' Open House with Directions Youth Services

5 – 7 p.m.

Directions Youth Services  
1138 Burrard Street

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

#### Board of Trade 101

7:15 – 9 a.m.

Greater Vancouver Board of Trade  
999 Canada Place  
Suite 400

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

#### 5th Annual Greater Vancouver Board of Trade Show

3:30 – 7 p.m.

Fairmont Waterfront Vancouver  
900 Canada Place Way

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

#### 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Fairmont Pacific Rim  
1038 Canada Place

**KEYNOTE:**

**Lisa Kimmel**

President & CEO  
Edelman Canada

**PANELLISTS:**

**Craig Richmond**

President and CEO  
Vancouver Airport Authority

**Kory Wilson**

Executive Director,  
Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships,  
BCIT

**Moderator: Bridgitte Anderson**

General Manager  
Edelman Vancouver

**Presenting Sponsor:** Edelman

TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2019

Sold Out

#### A Conversation with President Barack Obama

3 – 6:15 p.m.

Vancouver Convention Centre – West  
1055 Canada Place

**Barack Obama**

44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2019

#### UBC's Strategic Plan and You

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver  
791 West Georgia Street

**Professor Santa Ono**

President and Vice-Chancellor  
UBC

**Presenting Sponsor:** UBC Sauder School of Business

**Community Sponsor:** Boyden

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## TAXES | 'The reality check is in the mail'

GVBOT CEO Iain Black on the laundry list of cost increases facing B.C. businesses over the next 12 months

BY IAIN BLACK

The year 2018 had its fair share of positive news for B.C.'s business community, from stable economic growth, to strong employment numbers, to the single largest private-sector investment in Canadian history.

However, as we turn the page to 2019, a growing sense of tension and nervousness looms over our province's employers and job creators. In my recent discussions with CEOs, business owners, and Members of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, it has become clear that many believe we are overdue for a reality check.

Over the past 18 months, governments at all levels have announced a laundry list of tax increases, and 2019 is the year when the impact of those increases will fully hit the business community.

Whether it's payroll tax increases, property taxes increases, carbon tax increases, CPP increases, federal and provincial income tax increases for managers and professionals,

or corporate tax increases, the cumulative effect of these new cost increases will be significant.

Not to mention the introduction of new housing taxes that threaten to increase the cost of living in our region, and the new B.C. employer health payroll tax, which took effect on January 1 and will substantially drive up the cost of doing business for many — including small businesses and non-profits across the province.

To be blunt, the business community feels the optimistic outlook of the various levels of government has not factored in the impact of their recent decisions. Despite some economic indicators saying we are doing quite well, we fear we are still riding the momentum of past decisions and are thus very anxious about the storm clouds gathering on the horizon.

Admittedly, our economy has had a great run over the past decade. But our concern is that the current 10-year economic cycle will soon run out of steam, at a time when governments are busy piling on new costs to doing business. The confluence of

these scenarios would lead to a perfect storm.

Meanwhile, all of this is happening amidst a backdrop of significant change here in Greater Vancouver. In 2018, there were 16 new mayors elected across the Lower Mainland, who bring new perspectives — and new priorities — to the Mayors' Council. This leadership transition on municipal councils will have impacts for transportation priorities, regional economic development, and of course, the elephant in the room — housing affordability.

But there are some bright spots on the horizon. Perhaps the most notable among them is our growing tech sector here in Greater Vancouver, which promises to create jobs and generate economic activity.

The tech industry was bolstered even further in 2018 when the federal government launched the British Columbia-led Digital Technology Supercluster, an initiative that is estimated to create 50,000 jobs and inject \$15 billion in GDP to our provincial economy over the next decade.



We are also very encouraged to see the federal government's renewed focus on international trade diversification — a theme that both Finance Minister Bill Morneau and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau drove home in their speeches to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade in late 2018.

As Canada's Gateway to the Asia-Pacific, our region will play a critical role in driving the Canadian economy in years to come — particularly in light of the new Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which took

effect on December 30, 2018.

There is much at stake as we peer into the new year. With a federal election slated for this October and the possibility of a provincial election at any point, 2019 is shaping up to be yet another pivotal year for Canada, British Columbia, and Greater Vancouver. **SB**

Hon. Iain Black is President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. He previously served as a provincial MLA and held multiple economic cabinet positions, including minister of labour and minister of small business, technology, and economic development.



## 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer

Tuesday, February 26, 2019 | 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Fairmont Pacific Rim | 1038 Canada Place, Vancouver

The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer examines the state of trust and how leaders can build trust at a time when employees are demanding organizations take a stand on economic, social, and political issues.



KEYNOTE

**Lisa Kimmel**

President & CEO  
Edelman, Canada

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[boardoftrade.com/edelman2019](http://boardoftrade.com/edelman2019)



## Taking the Lead: Airbnb and Healthy Tourism in Vancouver

Tuesday, February 19, 2019 | 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Vancouver Club, 915 West Hastings Street, Vancouver



**Chris Lehane**

SVP Policy and Communications, Airbnb

Join Airbnb's Chris Lehane, SVP, Policy and Communications, as he discusses how home sharing can play a healthy role in housing constrained markets like Greater Vancouver. He will also share how Airbnb is leading the way in its work with cities around the globe, and how home sharing is reshaping the world of travel.

Presenting Sponsor:



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# SOUNDING BOARD

**PUBLISHER:** Business in Vancouver Media Group  
**EDITOR:** Greg Hoekstra, 604-640-5450  
**AD SALES:** Laura Torrance, 604-608-5145

**ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

Sounding Board is the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's official publication, distributed to all its Members, as well as all subscribers of Business in Vancouver newspaper. Sounding Board is published 11 times per year by Business in Vancouver Media Group in partnership with the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. The newspaper is read by business leaders and elected officials across B.C. and beyond, with a conservatively estimated total readership of 37,500.

**ABOUT THE BOARD OF TRADE**

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is Western Canada's most active and influential business association. We accelerate business success through our advocacy and public policy initiatives, our four Signature Programs for professional development, and our 100+ events each year, which educate and connect our region's business community. We engage with decision-makers to develop our region as a vibrant hub for commerce, trade, travel, and free enterprise. And we've been doing it with tangible results, for more than 130 years.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**OUR PURPOSE** is to support sustainable prosperity throughout the Greater Vancouver region.  
**OUR VISION** is to be an active, innovative, trusted, credible business organization, known for influencing decision-makers, and educating, connecting with, and engaging our communities.  
**OUR MISSION** is to provide leadership, information and connections, and public policy support that help ensure the Greater Vancouver region is competitive and the preferred Pacific Gateway for trade, commerce, and travel.  
**WE ARE** informed, respectful, principled, collaborative, and professional.

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## LEADERSHIP | It's time to get involved and get engaged

Chair Lori Mathison on President Barack Obama's upcoming visit and the importance of civic engagement

BY LORI MATHISON

In just over one month's time, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade will host one of the most highly anticipated events in its 131-year history.

As you may have read in the news — or perhaps on the cover of this month's *Sounding Board* — the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, is coming to our city on March 5 for a special, sold-out engagement at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

Needless to say, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is abuzz with excitement as we prepare to host our distinguished guest, who is quite possibly the most sought-after speaker in the world at this moment in history.

In our annual membership survey, President Obama was repeatedly identified as one of the top speakers that B.C. business leaders wanted us to bring to Vancouver. After more than a year of planning and groundwork behind the scenes, we are thrilled that we could finalize arrangements to bring him to our city next month.

Given today's geopolitical climate, President Obama's sage wisdom and insights have never been so pertinent. But perhaps what is most remarkable about President Obama is his lifelong dedication to principled diplomacy and respectful dialogue — an attribute that has earned him respect and admiration across the political spectrum.

In an era of rampant partisanship, polarization, fracturing opinions, and “fake news” it has never been so imperative to encourage, promote, and protect civilized discourse. It is my hope that when we host President Obama next month, he will touch on these issues in his remarks



Lori Mathison

and provide advice on how we can all help to bridge the divide, inspire hope, and foster a well-informed public.

One of the three stated priorities for my year as Chair of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is to increase democratic engagement, which stretches far beyond just encouraging individuals to vote when an election comes around. It also involves getting people engaged as citizens by providing a platform for them to learn about important issues, soliciting their input on public policy, and enabling them to give back to our community through volunteering.

Being involved in an organization such as the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is a great first step. By attending events, you have an opportunity to not only grow your business network and connections, but also learn about some of the key issues facing B.C.'s economy and the business community.

In addition, we regularly solicit our Members' input as we develop our public policy priorities. For example, in his CEO's message on page 3, Iain Black speaks about some of the tax changes and cost increases

facing many of you, our Members. We hope to collect even more of these stories and help amplify your voice in the weeks and months ahead.

We also make a concerted effort to help our Members discover volunteer opportunities in the broader community. For example, in late January our under-35 program, the Company of Young Professionals, hosted an outreach event where Members could meet with representatives from local non-profit organizations in search of young professionals to join their boards. In total, 30 different organizations took part in the event, including the Alzheimer Society of BC, Arts Club Theatre Company, Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, and more.

In recent months, our Members have volunteered to serve dinner at Salvation Army Belkin House, called donors at the Covenant House Thank-A-Thon, and picked up litter at the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup.

Why are these kinds of events and activities important to a business organization? Because they not only promote professional development, growth, and learning in individuals, but they help to increase the number of engaged citizens in our community — which benefits us all. As Barack Obama famously said in his farewell address at the end of his presidency, “Change only happens when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it.”

That's a mission that I'm proud to support. **SB**

Lori Mathison is 2018-19 Chair of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. She also serves as President and CEO of the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia.



5<sup>th</sup> Annual

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## IN FOCUS | Photos from recent events and activities at the Board of Trade



On Jan. 18, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade hosted its 30th annual Economic Outlook Forum presented by HSBC. This year's event brought together economists, trade experts, CEOs, and journalists to discuss what trends might impact B.C. businesses in the year ahead. The event kicked off with a keynote and economic forecast by Craig Alexander, Chief Economist for Deloitte Canada. Following his presentation, Alexander took questions from guests in a Q&A session moderated by GVBOT Chair Lori Mathison (above). | MATT BORCK



Bill Tam (far right) moderates a panel discussion on B.C.'s tech sector with Kirsten Sutton, Jack Newton, and Meredith Powell on Jan. 18. | MATT BORCK



Journalists Keith Baldrey (left) and Richard Zussman (middle) talk provincial politics with GVBOT CEO Iain Black (right) during the closing session of Economic Outlook 2019. | MATT BORCK



The Honourable Michelle Mungall, B.C.'s Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, speaks with reporters following her keynote to attendees of GVBOT's Energy Forum 2018 on Dec. 6. | VISION EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY



The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Canada's Minister of Natural Resources, sits down for a Q&A with Greater Vancouver Board of Trade President and CEO Iain Black during the 16th annual BC Natural Resources Forum in Prince George on Jan. 23.



The Honourable Jim Carr, Canada's Minister of International Trade Diversification, delivers a keynote speech at the Board of Trade's annual Energy Forum on Dec. 6. In his remarks, Minister Carr discussed new trade agreements and the federal government's focus on growing exports. | VISION EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY

Did you know the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade hosts nearly 130 speaker events, seminars, webinars, and networking receptions each year?

More photos at [facebook.com/boardoftrade](https://www.facebook.com/boardoftrade)



## EDUCATION | Google shares online marketing tips with small business owners

Small Business Council Members get a crash course during latest Thrive Series event

BY LYNN KITCHEN

More than 250 people attended the Small Business Council's latest Thrive Series event on Jan. 15, exploring the topic of "Marketing in the Age of Assistance." The event featured guest speaker Meagan Tanner, Google's Strategic Partner Manager.

In her role with Google, Tanner works with leading and next-gen companies to help businesses succeed through Google's products. Her helpful tips and strategies for local businesses focused on customer-centric approaches and the consumer's experience.

Tanner's core message was that consumers want to find information quickly, they want it personalized, and they want it on their own time.

Below are three of the key takeaways from Tanner's presentation for B.C. businesses to thrive in the age of assistance.

### Be there for your customers and make sure they know how to find you.

You can search, "Google my Business" to get your free business profile on Google. This service makes it easy to create an update your business profile so you can stand out and bring customers in. Other ways you can be there for your customer include improving your search engine optimization, local search, and social advertising.

### Be useful to your customers by creating rich content and providing valuable information about your product or service.

When a consumer is looking for a specific product or service, they are already a potential customer. If your website is easy to find, quick to load, and seamless to navigate, you will stand out from your competitors. If you are selling in other countries, be sure that you're using their currency to make it easier for the customer to make the purchase.



Meagan Tanner, Strategic Partner Manager, GMB Americas, Google

Speed is vital when providing assistive experiences. Studies have shown that 53 per cent of visitors will abandon a mobile search if the page takes longer than three seconds to load.



By making purchasing easy and seamless for your customer, you will be rewarded with growth in your online revenue.

### Be quick and be sure that you have a responsive website.

Speed is vital when providing assistive experiences. Studies have shown that 53 per cent of visitors will abandon a mobile search if the page takes longer than three seconds to load.

This statistic highlights how important it is to test your

website on various devices, including a desktop computer, a mobile phone, and a tablet. Be sure that your customer can quickly access information on your site the way that you intended.

You can test the speed of your website by typing your URL in the website testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com. Customers engage with businesses who meet the demand for a fast, relevant, and seamless experience.

This Small Business Council event was presented by Postmedia, a Premier Google Partner that can assist you develop a solution to driving traffic to your website. Keep an eye out on the Board of Trade's website for the next educational event in the Small Business Council's Thrive Series. **SB**

Lynn Kitchen is an online education and corporate training specialist. She also serves on the advisory committee for the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's Small Business Council.

 Learn more about the Small Business Council program, upcoming events, and how to get involved at [boardoftrade.com/sbc](http://boardoftrade.com/sbc).

# TAP

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