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GLOBE 2012: West coast leaders promise one million new 'clean energy' jobs in next decade

By ANDREA WOO, Vancouver Sun March 13, 2012



British Columbia Premier Christy Clark, flanked by California Secretary of Natural Resources John Laird (left), Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber (centre right) and Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire (right), speaks at GLOBE 2012, Vancouver, March 13 2012. Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann, PNG

VANCOUVER -- Encouraged by the results of a five-month study, west coast leaders on Tuesday night vowed to create up to a million new jobs in the "clean economy" within the next 10 years.

Leaders from the Pacific Coast Collaborative (PCC) -- B.C. Premier Christy Clark, Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and California Secretary of Natural Resource John Laird -- made the announcement at Vancouver's Fairmont Waterfront hotel as part of the opening reception for GLOBE 2012, a biennial international conference and trade fair on business and the environment.

"We have endorsed a vision that is an agenda for investment and accelerated job creation on the Pacific coast," Clark told a crowd of hundreds.

The PCC commissioned GLOBE Advisors, a subsidiary of the Vancouver-based not-for-profit GLOBE Foundation, to prepare the report in efforts guide the 2012 West Coast Action Plan on jobs, according to a news release from the provincial government. Its objective was to identify the most promising markets for job creation, including energy-efficient buildings and advanced transportation.

The report, titled West Coast Clean Economy: Opportunities for Investment and Accelerated Job Creation, found "the \$47 billion clean economy sector could triple in size by 2020, given the right policies and partnerships."

By then, the "transition toward a cleaner economy could generate up to 1.03 million net new jobs, a [gross domestic product] contribution of up to US \$143 billion and increased investments of between US \$147-192 billion," the report stated.

"Essentially, for every one clean economy job in the west coast region in 2010, an additional two jobs could be created by 2020."

Gregoire elaborated, using the state of Washington as an example: "We have created 100,000 clean energy jobs in the past five years," she said. "From 2003 to 2010, our clean energy jobs grew by 2.8 per cent while the rest of the jobs only grew by one. The mean wage for most [clean energy] jobs is about US \$46,000; that is greater than the average wage for all the other jobs in our state."

Clean energy jobs include: retrofitting existing structures and building new ones using energy-saving materials and methods; and research jobs to find new biofuels; jobs to develop new, light-weight materials for transportation, Gregoire said.

Leaders from B.C., California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska signed the PCC agreement on June 30, 2008, with a shared goal to promote a common front for policy alignment, action and information sharing.

This year's GLOBE 2012 runs March 14-16 in Vancouver and is expected to draw around 10,000 people from 50 countries.

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