

## **INTRODUCTION:**

We are submitting this document on behalf of the businesses and associations of Bowen Island. At a recent meeting discussions were held to visualize a plan for the future of business in our community and this paper reflects the input of the members (1 in 30 islanders) of the *Bowen Island Chamber of Commerce* as well as non-member businesses.

This paper includes excerpts of the report prepared by *Holland Barrs Planning Group Inc.* of July 2007. As a point of interest, the issues brought forward by our members are almost identical to those in the report conducted two years ago.

Bowen Island's economy is a small component of the GVRD economically because it is fairly dependent on off-island economic generators. Most people are employed off-island and those employed on-island work primarily in service sector jobs, or in jobs (e.g. construction and automotive supply) that support those who work (or have worked) off-island. Key exceptions include tourism operators, who depend on the Island's attractive character as a local resource, artists, and any remaining resource harvesting jobs.

Those who live on Bowen have, in the last 5-10 years, faced rapidly rising cost-of-living as housing prices have risen. Currently, the only prevalent non-single-family housing type on Bowen is secondary suites; however, this supply may be mismatched with rising employment demands in the service sector. This presents a potential risk to the economy, as employers must look elsewhere for employees, who in turn may have to commute long distances to work.

*[Example: A Quickway Enterprises employee emigrated from the United States was able to find work on Bowen but no affordable housing.]*

*[Example: A former resident of Bowen – a glazier - has left the Island due to the lack of affordable housing.] The new wealthy homeowner on Bowen can afford 4 hours of travel time on the glazier bill.*

Because many community members are employed off-island, and most drive to work, households are vulnerable to significant increases in energy-related transportation costs. In turn, if more efficient transportation is not developed, the community's income may be threatened as potential employees have a hard time competing for a job with others who have lower income needs. As a Municipality we have agreed to carbon footprint reductions by 2012 – how will this be achieved? *[Opportunity – alternative transportation – electric vehicles, car sharing co-op].*

Bowen's unique tourism resources are well protected in some but not all cases. In particular, highly visible Crown land on Bowen's peaks may be vulnerable to resource extraction, with little community control over aesthetic quality or impacts on water supply and quality – which in turn affect population capacity.

The flip side of that issue is that these same Crown lands and similar private lands areas are good potential resources for forestry. However, they are secured for that use, and/or the community has not yet positioned itself to maximize local value from forestry on these lands, including ensuring that they support consistent, long-term resource extraction and ecosystem health.

Viable agricultural land is not being farmed because rural landowners use their properties as retreats rather than as working farms. The subdivision of land has also constrained the ability to farm by raising land values and breaking up properties into pieces that are often too small to farm commercially. The Municipality needs to preserve and protect all present (ALR) and future agricultural land. In addition it is recommended that future buildings are placed on slopes to preserve potential agricultural land.

### **Strategic Goal:**

**The Chamber envisions a Bowen Island economy that is relatively diverse, highly efficient, supports community equity and diversity, and maximizes long-term economic stability and value (economic, community and environmental) from local on-island resources.**

### **Directions for Action:**

*The Municipality should incorporate sustainable development objectives explicitly into economic development strategies.*

### **Potential Early Projects:**

- ***Economic Strategy*** – Create a sustainable economic development strategy. This could be started with a workshop and brainstorm of ideas in many categories.
- ***Services Inventory*** – Develop an inventory of both existing and preferred services/amenities on the island. Highlight economic opportunities that fit with Bowen Island’s character. Ensure this list of businesses has ‘visibility’ for Island residents to encourage local shopping and services.
- ***Mixed Use Commercial Development*** – Allow for and encourage a unique mix of commercial uses in Snug Cove (e.g. artisan, light industrial, etc.) where appropriate.
- ***Economic Incentives*** – Hold a workshop to discuss what types of incentives Bowen Island provides to business owners considering an enterprise on the island.
- ***Buy Local Celebration*** – Hold a “Buy Local” celebration to enhance awareness of local businesses and the benefits of buying local. Consider additional ways to highlight local goods and services.

*The Municipality should promote green business leadership and practices, in addition to providing assistance, support, tools and programs.*

The Municipality should develop an organizational strategy for itself comprised of ‘green organizational/corporate practices’ and use them as the platform from which to encourage

businesses to do the same thing. The Municipality should make a request to expert organizations to deliver a range of energy efficiency programs for businesses including energy audits, facility retrofits, green fleets programs and others.

#### **Potential Early Projects:**

- ***Green Business Guidelines*** – Develop a list of green business practices to use within Municipality facilities
- ***Green Office Facilities*** – Develop a green office building to increase available office space on the island.
- ***Educational Workshop*** – Consider hosting an educational workshop on Bowen with special speakers telling the story of how they ‘greened’ their businesses.

#### ***The Municipality should explore an Integrated Business/Eco-Industrial Network Strategy.***

A key emerging movement in sustainable communities and economic development is that of industrial ecology, or eco-industrial networking (EIN). The Municipality should explore and work on developing an EIN strategy for the community in order to maximize energy and resource efficiency through integrating the waste and resource flows of new and existing businesses on the Island.

#### **Potential Early Projects:**

- **EIN Workshop** – Hold a forum or workshop on the resource needs of businesses in the community and explore how an eco-industrial approach would increase efficiency and innovation
- **Compost Project** – Evaluate the opportunity to use compost as a soil enhancement for forest and agricultural land on Bowen Island.
- **Resource** – [www.ecoindustrial.ca](http://www.ecoindustrial.ca)

## **Economic Development**

Many communities pursue economic development and sustainable development in an entirely independent manner, often unfortunately resulting in the two working against each other. Bowen Island is committed to ensuring that all economic development promotion occurs in the context of a clear commitment to increased performance on sustainability objectives.

### **Suggestions for long-term goals**

- Create unique mix of uses in cove – some light industrial, some artisans – make cove a vibrant alternative destination for businesses
- Best way to encourage a healthy island economy – not dependent on tourists – is to boost island population so there is an adequate innate domestic/captive market
- Implement a long-term strategy to promote and foster a strong local economy by providing sufficient incentives to those who are willing to start or run an enterprise (profit or non-profit) and developers who need to provide the space or facilities for such enterprises
- Communal office spaces with shared meeting rooms
- Ensure affordable housing available to house workers
- Intellectual businesses
- Art College/Science Park (**become a business incubator with a local College/ University**)
- More tourist accommodation
- Mixed-use, high-density buildings
- BIM support for businesses that directly contribute to other sustainability growth
- Build a small Convention Centre/Community Hall
- Work with and encourage the Chamber of Commerce to create and implement an Economic Development plan

- Encourage measured build-out to population limit to ensure employment for Island Contractors for a longer period of time

#### **Value of Business to Bowen:**

- Creates Community [*Example: Tuscany, Artisan Eats and The Ruddy Potato alone employ 50 teenagers introducing them to the workplace, keeping families together for the Summer and teaching them important life skills. Through employment preventing idle youth from developing poor habits*].
- Employment
- Generates revenue for the Municipality
- Improved services to Island residents

#### **Affordable Housing is an Obstacle to Business on Bowen:**

- Required density is not available on Bowen
- Low stock means rents are low quality and high priced
- OCP identifies the need for affordable housing and then prevents the allowable density to build and solve the problem
- Affordable housing should be built mainly in the Cove with small pockets around the Island

#### **Improvements to the Cove:**

- Implement one of the many Snug Cove Plans *immediately*

In conclusion, the last OCP has created single-family lots for commuters with a lifeless Cove. Ideally we see the next OCP enabling a diverse and prosperous economy with equitable and fair housing for all. We see it as a simple choice of *'more of the same'* or the creation of a vibrant Island with a healthy community. Bowen Island's talk and actions need to be in alignment.

After this OCP review is complete we see the next priority to be an Economic Development Plan coordinated with the Chamber of Commerce and the Municipality working together.

## **ADDENDUM TO REPORT**

### **NEEDS:**

- The Chamber envisions a Bowen Island economy that is relatively diverse, highly efficient, supports community equity and diversity, and maximizes long-term economic stability and value (economic, community and environmental) from local on-island resources.
- The Municipality and Chamber should jointly create the position of Economic Development Officer.
- Create a sustainable economic development strategy.
- Accept higher density and create affordable housing.
- Implement one of the many Snug Cove plans immediately.
- Mixed Use Commercial Development.
- Explore eco-industrial networking.
- Compost project.

### **AMBITIONS:**

- Create unique mix of uses in cove – some light industrial, some artisans – make cove a vibrant alternative destination for businesses
- Best way to encourage a healthy island economy – not dependent on tourists – is to boost island population so there is an adequate innate domestic/captive market

- Implement a long-term strategy to promote and foster a strong local economy by providing sufficient incentives to those who are willing to start or run an enterprise (profit or non-profit) and developers who need to provide the space or facilities for such enterprises

### **THOUGHTS:**

- Since the last OCP Bowen Island has moved in the direction of single family homes for individuals of high net worth.
- We see this as a simple choice of creating ‘more of the same’ or the creation of a vibrant island with a healthy business community.
- Peak Oil: Commuters are vulnerable to significant increases in energy-related transportation costs.
- Bowen Island has much to do to be carbon neutral by 2012(Commuters, Suburbia, Food, Energy)
- Rising transport costs will create the need for local agriculture.
- Land must be preserved for future agricultural use.
- Bowen Island’s talk and actions need to become in alignment.
- The Holland Barr report of July 2007 succinctly addresses all of these points. The Chamber deplores the lack of action on this well-thought out document.