

We are writing to make a submission for federal funding support to develop a comprehensive management plan for the Howe Sound Region in British Columbia. We are hopeful that this funding could be provided for in the upcoming budget. We believe proper management planning can help ensure prosperous and secure communities and can also help improve Canada's regulatory regime, which are two of the themes that have been identified for the upcoming budget,

Howe Sound is a valuable resource for all Canadians. It is a unique blend of mountains, ocean and wilderness areas situated less than an hour from Vancouver, a major cosmopolitan city internationally recognized as one of the most livable in the world. In recent years, millions of dollars of taxpayer and private funds have been expended on the remediation of Howe Sound and it has experienced a remarkable recovery. Many millions of taxpayer dollars have also been expended on highway and other infrastructure projects and in promoting the Sea to Sky Corridor (which leads to Whistler/Blackcomb) as an international tourist destination. Howe Sound is at the heart of this corridor.

Currently Howe Sound is a complex region from a management perspective with 12 local and regional governments, three First Nations and the Federal government all having jurisdiction over some or all of the area. However there is no comprehensive management plan for the area despite the fact that it is one integrated ecological and socio-economic region.

On an ongoing basis, individual government bodies are considering development proposals and major projects which will have dramatic effects on other communities and economic interests in the region. However these proposals are being considered in a planning vacuum without any overall direction from a comprehensive management plan that considers all of the diverse socio-economic factors that can be impacted by new projects.

It is critical for the future of the region to develop a comprehensive planning framework so that decisions can be made with proper consideration of the effects that those decisions will have on the communities and economy of the region as a whole.

As a result of its proximity to Vancouver, there are significant development pressures being experienced in the Howe Sound region as the area continues to grow. Tourism is expected to generate \$750 million in incremental economic growth in the region over the next 5 years, but this growth and attendant job creation as well as the prior investment made in infrastructure development, environmental remediation and international marketing will be jeopardized unless a comprehensive regional management and economic development plan is put in place. Appropriate planning is required to maintain the unique features that have made the region a recognized tourist destination while balancing other economic interests which collectively provide the impetus for economic growth.

Proper planning will benefit all of the residents of the region by encouraging economic development, investment opportunities and job growth. It will benefit industry and encourage investment by providing greater certainty in the development process. The local and regional governments have recognized that the current fragmented planning which is a product of the overlapping jurisdictions is not adequate to meet the future demands of growth and

development. The concept of a regional plan is supported by the 12 local and regional governments surrounding Howe Sound as well as the local Member of Parliament and Provincial MLA's. Sixty-five community organizations, governmental authorities and industry associations have endorsed the concept of developing a comprehensive regional management plan.

The Federal government can take a leadership role and provide funding to allow the planning process to start. Federal funding will allow for the strategic co-ordination of existing planning initiatives and development of necessary economic and demographic studies that will complement existing resources.

A Comprehensive Management Plan for Howe Sound would provide clarity and direction for economic development. Strategic planning will minimize investment risk, create stable job opportunities and allow business development to flourish. It will allow for a comprehensive engagement process involving First Nations, industry stakeholders and the local community and will help retain the critical socio-economic and cultural factors which are key to future growth while promoting economic development.

A proper management plan allows for certainty in the planning and development process and so encourages investment. This will benefit both industry and economic interests as well as the individual residents and local community groups in the region. It could also provide a planning template for sustainable development that could be used in other regions across Canada.

Federal funding is required to develop the framework for proceeding with a planning process that will encourage sustainable economic growth while maintaining the bio-diversity that has allowed the region to be internationally recognized as a tourism destination of choice. Proper planning will also encourage investment and continued immigration in one of the world's most livable regions.

We hope that this submission will be considered favourably.

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