

QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWS



January 14, 2006

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Welcome back to the Queen Charlotte Islands Chamber of Commerce newsletter! We welcome input from members and supporters including your special events, news items and suggestions on what should be included in future issues. To request information on membership or on any of the items in this newsletter, contact the office or any of our directors listed to the left. Contact information for our directors, and for all other members, is available on our website. A hard copy membership list will be provided on request.

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Upcoming Events

- Jan. 17 Queen Charlotte Islands Chamber of Commerce regular monthly meeting at the office above Gas Plus in Port Clements.
- Feb. 14 Haida Gwaii Tourism Association meeting, 7:00 PM, location TBA.
- March 19 Haida Gwaii Tourism Association AGM at the Tlell Fire Hall at 2:00 PM.

Member News

- If you are considering becoming a member, please note that until March 31, dues are 50% off for new members.

Updates

QCI Chamber Operating Costs Donation Campaign

For those of you who are still planning to contribute, just a reminder that in addition to mailing donations to our office at Box 448, Port Clements, BC V0T 1R0, donations may be made directly to our account at Northern Savings Credit Union, Masset Branch, #108886. If you choose this option, please email the chamber office at chamber@qcislands.net with the details so that you can receive a receipt and recognition in the e-newsletter.

Recent Correspondence

A limited selection of recent correspondence of note is listed below. Unless otherwise noted, all of these items can be forwarded to you on request by email from the QCI Chamber of Commerce office. Arrangements can also be made to fax copies if materials are not too lengthy.

- BC Chamber of Commerce:
 - BC Chamber federal election material, including questions for federal election candidates based on the election commitments made so far by the parties, election commitments as of Jan 9, and a Legislation update listing several Bills that were due to pass through the House which were important to the business community. These will also be available on the QCI Chamber website as described under *Chamber Express*.
 - Websites for the Liberal Party platform (http://www.liberal.ca/images/dir/PDFs/platform_e.pdf) and the Green Party platform (http://mj11.greenparty.ca/platform_2006.html?&MMN_position=141:141)
 - Report from the Law Society of BC in relation to the BC Court of Appeal decision striking down the payment of SST on legal fees, with John Winter's comment: "For BC businesses, the tax imposes a cost their competitors in other jurisdictions do not face. It is an additional cost that is an impediment to business development in this province."
- Canadian Tourism Commission: As of Dec. 5 the Head Office of the Canadian Tourism Commission has moved from Ottawa to Vancouver. The new office address is Suite 1400, Four Bentall Centre, 1055 Dunsmuir Street, Box 49230, Vancouver, BC V7X 1L2. The new phone number is 604-638-8300.
- Chris Ashurst - re the Haida Gwaii Economic Development group: "People can go to <http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/haidagwaiiecodevo/> and view a quick intro about the group. In order to sign up, they will need to follow the instructions on that screen and get a yahoo account. It's a bit of a hassle, but not too bad. Alternately, they can sign up for the group by emailing: haidagwaiiecodevo-subscribe@yahoogroups.ca and getting the instructions to receive messages that way."

- The Community Development Institute, UNBC: Newsletter including the following: "The CDI is pleased to offer assistance to the Old Massett Village Council as they develop a "5 Year Human Resources Strategic Plan". The project involves a community-driven process to explore local skills and training capacity and to identify the potential skills development, education, and training resources needed to meet the needs of future employment opportunities. The goal is to create a strategic plan for the Old Massett community. The project is funded by Service Canada and is managed by John Disney, Economic Development Officer for Old Massett Village Council."
- COTA: BC Tourism Industry Conference 2006, entitled Tourism Uncorked: Visitor Quality Assurance, February 15-17, 2006, Penticton, BC. Save \$100 if you register before January 20, 2006. Business promotion opportunity through the BC Tourism Auction.
- BC Progress Board - A special discussion paper prepared for the BC Progress Board on education entitled The Role of International Education - Expanding Student Opportunity and Economic Development in British Columbia, is now available at the Board's website: www.bcprogressboard.com. If you would like a copy of the full report mailed to you, go to <http://www.bcprogressboard.com/ideas.php>. The News Release is available from the Chamber office.
- Northwest Community College - Masset Campus:
 - 5 upcoming inexpensive seminars on different areas of financial planning
 - Upcoming Occupational First Aid Level 3 course offering in Masset, January 24-February 3, 8:30am - 5:30pm (70 hours + exam time). Cost: \$695.00. Please note that this may be the only time this course will be offered this year at NWCC Masset Campus.
- Minutes of the Queen Charlotte Islands Forest Roads Meeting December 1st, 2005.
- Vancouver Island Regional Library: Introduction to Business Source Premier, a research database containing the full text for nearly 8,200 magazines, journals and reports. It provides comprehensive coverage in all areas of business, including marketing, management, MIS, POM, accounting, banking, finance, and more. This database also has the Enhanced Business Searching Interface, which contains market research reports, industry reports, country reports, company profiles and SWOT analyses. Library customers can read, print or email information from Business Source Premier by logging into the database with their library card on the library's web site, anytime. Using the "Web Library" link, you'll find Business Source Premier as well as a host of other research databases. To learn more, please visit www.virl.bc.ca and explore the Topics for Life section on Business or visit the Web Library to explore the full range of online resources available.

Background on Jan. 17 Agenda Items

This information is being presented both to allow you to familiarize yourself with the issues before the meeting and also to allow members the opportunity to provide their input beforehand if not able to attend the meeting.

Island Exchange Forum Update

Northern Savings Credit Union has generously supported us with a grant of \$6,000 towards this project, accepted by Director Skye Cantin at a special meeting last month. This means we can go ahead with planning even though the Gwaii Trust has not yet come through. There have already been two planning meetings this month, and we intend to apply once again to Gwaii Trust for the Feb. 15 deadline with a revised budget and slightly delayed time line. More details at the January 17th meeting, after the 6:00 teleconference scheduled with the Prince of Wales Island Chamber of Commerce directors immediately prior to our regular meeting.

QCI Chamber of Commerce AGM date and elections

Our AGM is generally held in February or early March, so we will begin planning at this meeting. Please consider running for an executive position, or participating in a committee to nominate candidates for the executive positions. Chamber of Commerce Week is February 20-24, so perhaps we can arrange our AGM date to correspond with that. It would be good to have an overall theme with a keynote speaker. How about community economic development, perhaps considering how the QCI Chamber of Commerce could foster the development of a five year plan for Haida Gwaii as initially proposed by John Disney? We could ask Don Manson or Greg Halseth from the Community Development Institute at UNBC to be our keynote speaker. Please bring your ideas or your opinions on this idea to the Jan. 17 meeting or email chamber@qcislands.net.

BC Chamber of Commerce Task Force Appointees re BC Ferries

We ran out of time to really discuss this last meeting, but in light of the ferry surcharges and other challenges, this is becoming urgent. Please consider being a representative for Haida Gwaii on this task force, or suggest somebody you think would be effective. Below is a description of what the BC Chamber is looking to achieve with the Task Force and some indication of possible direction that has been received so far. Jon Garson, the director of Policy Development and Communication for the BC Chamber of Commerce points out that "It is important to note that nothing here is sacred and all will be subject to the input of the task force members."

The BC Chamber was a strong advocate for BC Ferries to be moved to an arms length organization to free the organization from government interference and to allow the growth of this vital transportation infrastructure as demand and growth of the Provincial economy dictates. The Chamber felt that a Crown Corporation operating under a government mandate cannot be expected to function either effectively or efficiently in the absence of a clear policy framework. It is difficult to ask BC Ferries to be fiscally accountable when its costs are increased by political agendas with major and often

undetermined consequences.

With that said it is clear that many chambers and communities have significant concerns and issues with BC Ferries services and the role they play as an essential transportation link and their subsequent role in economic development. As a result it was decided by the BC Chamber Board of Directors that we should form a task force to examine the concerns of our members, develop recommendations and policy on how best to address these concerns and take these directly to BC Ferries.

As a provincial organization it is important that the BC Chamber only addresses those issues that affect the service as a whole as we cannot concern ourselves with local issues regarding individual routes or particular communities concerns. We do not mean to imply these are not important to your community, or to the province, but we are restricted by our bylaws to address issues that are of concern to the province as a whole; as such we will be looking at the future direction of the organization.

At District meeting conducted in several communities the issues that have arisen so far are;

- What mechanism do BC Ferries use to connect economic development initiatives to BC Ferries
- Consultation - particularly the framework for involvement in consultation, what structure exists for consultation, and what results have/will be achieved
- Transportation Links, People focused
- Investment & Involvement, cost fares, revenue sharing, scheduling as it relates to economic development

As a result of this input we also posed several questions for David Hahn, these were:

- What do you see as your role in Economic Development now as a private enterprise as schedules and fares will affect economic development?
- You have committed to public consultations. What plans do you have for this? On what? And how?
- What about the business of moving people? As a private corporation, are you receptive to join a joint venture partnership in the establishment of new transportation options?
- Is the current operations model the most efficient and effective? What is your vision over the next 10 years?

With these criteria in mind next steps will be to develop a term of reference for the task force that will lay out the general areas of focus and also a timeline for the task force to complete its work. As with all initiatives of the BC Chamber we strive to ensure that we include representation from all relevant stakeholder communities and would therefore request that the Queen Charlotte Islands Chamber of Commerce give serious consideration to nominating a suitable individual to participate in this task force.

If you have any questions then please feel free to contact Jon Garson, who says he will be happy to help.

Contact info: jgarson@bcchamber.org; www.bcchamber.org
604 683 0700 (ext 302), 778 388 3547 cell, 604 683 0416 fax

We also have the following from Carol Kulesha (can we persuade you to be our rep, Carol, once the Village becomes a member?), received from Mark Liedemann:

Information regarding the alternative service provider process on the Northern Routes

* On August 2, 2005 BC Ferries issued a Request for Expressions of Interest as part of a formal process to identify interested parties who want to provide ferry services on the Northern Routes.

* Three responses were received by the September 30, 2005 deadline.

* BC Ferries is evaluating these responses and deciding how best to proceed.

* Under the/ Coastal Ferry Act/, BC Ferries is required to test the market to determine if other operators, under contract to BC Ferries, can deliver services more efficiently.

* BC Ferries has a long term obligation through the Coastal Ferry Services Contract to ensure that the Core Service Levels are delivered. This obligation is in effect regardless of whether BC Ferries' vessels and employees are delivering the service or whether an alternative service provider uses its vessels and employees. There are clear, substantial penalties for BC Ferries if the service is not delivered.

* As communicated to you and local communities, one of our objectives is to keep the local community and stakeholders informed about our efforts. At this time other than disclosing that three responses were received by the September 30th deadline we have no other information that we can share with you at this time. When we decide if and how we will be proceeding we will provide you with another update.

BC Chamber of Commerce AGM

Policy Resolutions, Task Force Participation Opportunity

The BC Chamber of Commerce AGM will be May 25th to 28th, 2006 at Panorama Mountain village near Invermere. Policy resolutions for consideration at the AGM must be submitted by March 27, 2006. The BC Chamber is pleased to announce that they have set a new record this year by already having received several policy resolutions for the 2006 AGM. Their bylaws provide the following criteria for potential policy issues:

1. Resolutions must be provincial or national in character (in short is the issue a subject that affects all, or a significant number of, businesses throughout British Columbia?)
2. Resolutions must be general in application to the economic public welfare.
3. Resolutions must address a timely, current problem that requires action now.
4. Resolutions must be properly researched and include background material that is factual, detailed and complete.

The 2005-2006 Policy Development Guide contains a very amusing example of what a proposed resolution should look like, which will be shared upon request at the Jan. 17 meeting (or faxed later, subject to volunteer secretary availability).

The BC Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is looking the formalize the role of Task Force volunteers in the policy development process. As part of the 2005-2006 Policy Development Process every volunteer for a BC Chamber Task Force will be invited to:

- Review current policy statements - volunteers will be asked to review the section of the Policy and Positions Manual in which they have an interest and to participate in a conference call to provide input on where improvements can be made to these policies, areas that have not been addressed in the policy and to provide recommendations on areas not addressed by our current

policy manual.

- Review new policy resolutions - volunteers will be asked to provide input on every new policy resolution received by the BC Chamber. This input will focus on the validity of the recommendations, the quality of the background and whether it should be supported by the BC Chamber Policy Review committee. This process will also be repeated for new resolutions from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce

This is a unique opportunity for members to play a fundamental role in the policy development process of the BC Chamber of Commerce, the broadest business organization in BC, representing businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions of the province. No other organization allows its members such a fundamental role in deciding its policy priorities and the BC Chamber urges us to take full advantage of this unique opportunity. Committee Task Force Participation Forms are available at the QCI Chamber office, and we will be asking for volunteers at the meeting. In addition to the special focus on BC Ferries as described above, the following sectors of interest are listed: Aboriginal Affairs, Agriculture, Advanced Education, Construction/Trades, Education, Energy, Environment, Fisheries, Financial Services, Forestry, Health, IT/High Tech, Government Services, Labour, Manufacturing, Mining, Municipal Affairs, Oil and Gas, Retails, Science & Bio Industry, Skills Training, Sports/Entertainment, Tourism/Recreation, Transportation.

Governor's Bursary

Our Chamber may be eligible to send a delegate to the 2006 AGM & Conference in Invermere - Panorama Mountain Village at no cost if we apply by this bursary by Feb. 10, 2006. The application requires a one page typewritten explanation of why and how this bursary would be of benefit to our Chamber, a financial statement from the most recent fiscal year, and a budget for 2006. The bursary covers the registration fee, transportation, and accommodation for the Annual General Meeting & Conference for one person and is transferable within our Chamber.

Northwest Chamber Leaders Conference Bursary

We have received the following information and a bursary application form from the organizer of this conference.

"The Northwest Chamber Leaders Conference is unique to both Canada and the United States in that this is the only conference designed for Executive Directors, chamber staff AND our Volunteer board leaders. Why? So that our Board members can work together with the paid staff to understand all issues facing chambers in today's world. You and your board member will take away ideas, thoughts and challenges that will enhance the chamber's position in your community.

This year the conference is focusing on:

* *Membership *Retention *Non Dues Revenues * Benefits *People

* Additional session include: "Dressing for Success"

* Keynote speaker: Jim Lysaght "Laughter and a Lesson"

Registration costs (Canadian): BEFORE January 31, 2006 1st Delegate \$340.00, 2nd Delegate \$300.00, Any Additional Delegate(s): \$239.00. After January 31st Registration is \$420.00 Canadian Air Lines - Horizon Air flies directly from Vancouver to Missoula

BC Chamber Executive Organization provides 2 Bursaries, one for staff and one for a Board Member."

Partnership with Hecate Strait Employment Development Society & Training Centre on another Youth Tourism Project

We have the following letter from Kathy Bedard to consider:

Dear Chamber Members:

Hecate Strait Employment Development Society is so proud of our partnership of this year that enabled 11 barriered young people find work experience opportunities and/or employment with Chamber members around Masset and Port Clements, in addition to having the opportunity to access training.

Community members and the Career Development Centre in Masset, as well as Service Canada, are asking us to put on another similar project, and as manager of Hecate Strait, I am wondering if we could count on the Chamber once again? We would be looking to begin the project in April 2006 with participants placed in late May or early June.

I do hope that the QCI Chamber could consider supporting this proposal as part of a community development opportunity for the Islands.

Sincerely,
Kathy Bedard
Manager

BC Ferries Schedules, February 11 - 16, 2006

In order to accommodate BC Ferries' many customers attending the popular All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince Rupert, the following schedule will apply between February 11 and 16:

Prince Rupert/Skidegate:

Location	Date	Time
Depart Prince Rupert	Saturday, February 11	11:00 pm
Arrive Skidegate		6:00 am
Depart Skidegate	Sunday, February 12	9:00 am
Arrive Prince Rupert		3:30 pm
Depart Prince Rupert		1:30 pm
Arrive Skidegate	Wednesday, February 15	8:00 pm
Depart Skidegate		11:00 pm
Arrive Prince Rupert	Thursday, February 16	6:00 am

Inside Passage:

Location	Date	Time	
Depart Prince Rupert	Sunday, February 12	6:30 pm	
Arrive Klemtu	Monday, February 13	3:45 am	
Depart Klemtu		4:30 am	
Arrive Bella Bella		8:00 am	
Depart Bella Bella		9:00 am	
Arrive Shearwater		9:45 am	
Depart Shearwater		10:15 am	
Arrive Port Hardy		5:15 pm	
Depart Port Hardy		9:00 pm	
Arrive Bella Bella		Tuesday, February 14	3:30 am
Depart Bella Bella			4:30 am
Arrive Ocean Falls	7:00 am		
Depart Ocean Falls	7:30 am		
Arrive Prince Rupert	9:00 pm		

Customers are reminded to check in and be prepared for boarding at least 60 minutes prior to the scheduled departure.

Updated sailing information may also be obtained from Prince Rupert Terminal at (250) 624-9627, Skidegate Terminal at (250) 559-4485, or call toll free to 1-888-223-3779 between the hours of 7:00 am and 10:00 pm.

BC Chamber Express

Federal Election to Intensify in New Year

We are now well into the federal election campaign. It is pretty clear that the election will be close. With this in mind much of the focus will be on key battlegrounds where the parties believe seats are vulnerable, and BC will be high on this list with a number of seats very close in the polls. This places us in the unique position where we will be heavily courted by all the parties, it is our responsibility to seize this opportunity by ensuring the issues of importance to the business community are heard by all candidates and that our priorities form a part of the agenda of whoever wins the election.

The BC Chamber will be producing material for our members that will focus on the issues of importance to your members across the province as well as some guidelines on where the parties stand on these issues and some questions that should be asked of all candidates running for office. (Note: these are available on the QCI Chamber of Commerce website under the "Correspondence" heading.)

Ministry of Small Business and Revenue initiatives

Small Business Roundtable

The permanent Small Business Roundtable has been formed to provide advice to the provincial government on “issues, strategies and potential actions to make our province the most business friendly jurisdiction in Canada.” The BC Chamber provided several nominations to the Ministry and was pleased to see Bruce Sutherland from WOLFTEK Industries Inc. (Previously PG Mill Supplies Ltd.) in Prince George and Naomi Yamamoto from Tora Design in North Vancouver and past Chair of the Board of the BC Chamber appointed to the Roundtable. Naomi will serve as both a small business owner and as official representative of the BC Chamber. The roundtable will be touring the province and will be holding invitation only hearings to listen to the concerns and interests of small business. For further details on visit www.smallbusinessroundtable.ca.

Provincial Sales Tax (PST) Review

Chambers of Commerce have consistently been a strong voice calling for review of the PST as overly complex, bureaucratic and a significant impediment to small business. As such we were pleased to see the Ministry announce a review of the PST. While the government has billed this review as comprehensive it does have the caveat that recommendations to simplify, streamline and enhance fairness must be revenue neutral and must maintain current revenue streams. In effect the review will look at the administration of the PST. Nevertheless this is a welcome initiative and we strongly encourage all members to become actively involved in the public consultations that are being held across the province. For further details on the review and the public consultations visit <http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/PSTReview/index.htm>

Limited progress on Softwood

December 5 saw a positive step in the ongoing softwood lumber dispute when the US Department of Commerce (DOC) announced as part of its annual administrative reviews that it was reducing duties on Canadian softwood lumber. As a result of this announcement Canada will see the duties fall from 20.15% to 10.81% (this comprises a new countervailing duty (CVD) rate of 8.7% and a “all others” anti-dumping duty (AD) rate of 2.11%). With these new rates scheduled to take effect soon there is some cause for celebration, but as always in this file there is also a word of caution. According to International Trade Canada, the reduction in these rates may bring some relief to Canadian softwood lumber exporters, and, as such, is a positive development. However, it is important to note that as a result of the NAFTA Extraordinary Challenge Committee (ECC) decision in the threat of injury case, the United States is legally obligated to reduce the CVD and AD rates to less than 1%, thereby orders, refund all duties collected with interest, and terminate all ongoing administrative reviews.

On a separate front, we were also pleased to note that a December 6 World Trade Organization (WTO) Appellate Body decision supported Canada’s position that U.S. procedures used to establish countervailing duties (CVD) on Canadian softwood lumber imports are inconsistent with WTO rules. As a result of the Appellate Body decision, the case will now be sent to arbitration to determine the amount of retaliation Canada is entitled to in the event the U.S. does not bring itself into conformity with its WTO obligations. Canada is requesting authorization to retaliate against the U.S. in the amount of C\$200 million. Arbitration will begin in early 2006, following WTO adoption of the Appellate Body report. The government of Canada would seek the views of Canadians before any retaliatory measures were imposed.

Byrd Amendment scrapped

Wednesday December 21 saw the US Senate vote 51-50 to scrap the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act of 2000

(the so-called Byrd Amendment). The Byrd Amendment was introduced four years ago to protect the struggling US steel industry but also applies to the \$5 in duties collected on softwood. While this is a step in the right direction as with all decisions that would have an impact on softwood there are several important caveats. Firstly, the repeal of Byrd was part of a larger bill that still has the hurdle of a vote in the House of Representatives to pass but more importantly is the fact that the Senate threw in a compromise by extending Byrd to Oct. 1, 2007. This leaves significant doubt about softwood duties and leaves the very real possibility that these duties will still end up being distributed to the US industry.

Open Skies with US finally arrives

The US and Canada have finally agreed a new open skies air service agreement that will take effect on September 1, 2006. This agreement will have real benefit to BC through the granting of unrestricted fifth freedom rights for passengers and cargo, unrestricted seventh freedom rights for cargo, full cargo co-terminalization and a number of other important initiatives.

The Chamber has been a strong advocate for the importance of this agreement and while we were disappointed not to see the issues of cabotage, rights of establishment and seventh freedom rights for passengers addressed in the agreement this is a significant step in the right direction. The BC Chamber will continue to move for the inclusion of those areas not addressed as well as having this sort of open skies agreement become the benchmark for all Canada's future air agreements.

Active Communities

The Active Communities Initiative is committed to improving the health of British Columbians. The BC Recreation and Parks Association is implementing the Initiative with support from the Ministry of Health and in partnership with ActNow BC and 2010 Legacies Now. We are pleased to announce that the Active Communities website is now live at www.activecommunities.bc.ca.

Active Communities regional workshops are now scheduled in ten cities throughout the province and begin as early as October 21st. Workshops will be hosted in Oak Bay, Courtenay, Burnaby, Abbotsford, Kamloops, Cranbrook, Trail, Prince George, Terrace and Ft. St. John. Individuals from all cities in these regions are invited to attend. These workshops are an integral part of the Initiative as they lay the foundation for developing your Active Community plan. Seating capacity is limited at each workshop so please register soon. There is no cost to attend the workshops and lunch is provided. Please refer to the workshop section of the BC Chamber of Commerce website www.bcchamber.org (under Resources) to find out more information.

If you have any questions about the Active Communities Initiative, please contact Curtis Atkinson, Program Coordinator

directly at 604-629-0965, ext. 38, or by email at catkinson@bcrcpa.bc.ca.