

Green Tourism Forum II



April 22, 2008
Vancouver, BC

Forum Report

**Hosted by:
B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts and
Tourism British Columbia in partnership with the
Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia**

To the Forum's Participants,

We wish to thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to attend the Green Tourism Forum II (GTF II) held in Vancouver on Earth Day 2008. Your comments and input have and will continue to guide the work of the government and industry partners who form the Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG).

This report outlines the foundational elements and progressive thinking that has driven the work since the first Green Tourism Forum in October 2007. The report summarizes the insightful feedback and input received from forum participants and concludes by outlining the next steps required to develop and implement *B.C.'s Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability* (the Strategy).

GTF II continued to build momentum for strategic action by providing an avenue for highly constructive dialogue and feedback on the *Sustainable/Green Tourism in BC: A Framework and Plan for Action (Framework)* in order to implement the *Strategy* in British Columbia. We are very encouraged by the strong level of agreement and support forum participants expressed in general for the fundamental shifts proposed, and in particular for the Framework.

Undeniably, there are challenging and exciting times ahead as we establish the dedicated team that will develop and implement the strategic actions aimed at establishing B.C.'s reputation as a green tourism destination and leader in environmental, economic and social sustainability.

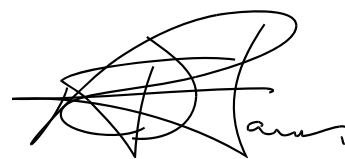
British Columbia is unique in the variety of tourism experiences it has to offer to both domestic and international visitors. A sustainability strategy will ensure that those experiences will continue for the enjoyment of future generations. We thank you for your continued support on our journey towards sustainability.

Sincerely,



Bruce Okabe, Deputy Minister, MTSA

Sincerely,



Rod J. Harris, President & CEO, TBC

Sincerely,



Steve Regan, President & CEO, COTA

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Overview of the Day	6
Resulting Forum Discussion	7
Summary of Feedback and Input	7
Summary of Next Steps	10
Conclusion	11

Appendices

Appendix A: GTF II Participants Listing.....	12
Appendix B: GTF II Agenda.....	14
Appendix C: Framework and Action Plan for Moving Forward.....	16

Introduction

Earth Day, April 22nd 2008 appropriately set the stage for the second Green Tourism Forum (GTF II) hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA) and Tourism British Columbia (TBC), in partnership with the Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia (COTA). On this day, fifty-one of tourism's top leaders (many of whom had attended the first Green Tourism Forum in October of 2007) convened in Vancouver to address two objectives:

1. To move the industry forward on leadership and excellence in tourism sustainability.
2. To hear about, discuss and confirm progress made since the first Green Tourism Forum, including *Sustainable/Green Tourism in BC: A Framework and Plan for Action (Framework)* developed by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG)¹.

GTF II was successful in bringing together a broad spectrum of key government and tourism industry stakeholders who worked together during the day to achieve these objectives via candid discussion and by sharing insights and progressive ideas.

This report is intended to capture the issues, the feedback and the input from forum participants and begins by providing a brief background leading up to GTF II. The report then provides an overview of the day, followed by an analysis of the input received from GTF II participants. The report then outlines the next steps for developing and implementing B.C.'s *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability (Strategy)*.

Background

Sustainability and, specifically, green house gas (GHG) emission reduction is a priority for the Government of British Columbia (B.C.). A number of key governmental initiatives have or will be implemented to address sustainability and climate change, including Budget 2008 which directs over \$1 billion to support the government's GHG emission reduction targets. Similarly, MTSA has a mandate to foster the sustainable development of tourism in a manner that *delivers lasting provincial economic and social benefits while ensuring sustainable environmental management*². A new action in the Cabinet endorsed *Tourism Action Plan* (Feb 2007) includes the objective of "Leveraging our *Super, Natural British Columbia*[®] brand with a new, world class *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability*."

Sustainability has long been a priority for numerous tourism businesses in this province and many have already implemented sustainable practices. Collectively, the tourism industry has also been taking a leadership role in defining a vision of a more sustainable, greener tourism industry for B.C. Specifically, the work of the Foresight Project³ (2006 – 07), overseen by COTA and a joint industry-government task force, provided the foundation for moving forward with a vision of sustainability.

All of these actions and the previous work undertaken by government, industry and academia prompted the need for active partners and key stakeholders to sit down together and strategize the required overall plan and actions to bring sustainability to all of B.C.'s tourism industry. Consequently, MTSA, COTA, and the BC Sustainable Tourism Collective (BCSTC)⁴ hosted the first Green Tourism Forum on October 29, 2007.

¹ List of STWG members can be found on the first page of the *Framework* document, Appendix C

² MTSA, March 2007, Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts Service Plan Summary 2007/08 – 2009/10

³ The Foresight Project culminated in the production of a report entitled: *Foresight: Shaping a Sustainable Vision for Tourism in British Columbia*. For a copy of the full report, published in June 2007, please see http://www.cotabc.com/misc/Foresight_FullReport_forWebsite.pdf

⁴ BCSTC "was founded on the vision that travel within B.C. can foster appreciation and stewardship for the natural environment, regions and communities" and is composed of the following tourism operators: Armstrong Group (Rocky Mountaineer Vacations, Gray Line West), Canadian Mountain Holidays, Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts (B.C.), Nimmo Bay Resort, and Whistler Blackcomb.

Forty of B.C.'s tourism leaders, along with key federal participants (Air Canada, Canadian Tourism Commission, Parks Canada and Industry Canada) convened in Vancouver to begin to discuss a greener, more sustainable tourism industry for British Columbia.

During the first Green Tourism Forum, participants went through a process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of B.C.'s tourism industry, as well as establishing a list of 20 action items that would help the industry collectively develop and implement the Strategy (GTF I report is available from <http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/>).

Based upon the direction received at GTF I, a small working group consisting of government, tourism associations, and tourism businesses formed the *Sustainable Tourism Working Group* (STWG). With the assistance and visionary input of Anna Pollock, CEO of Desticorp UK Ltd., the STWG was able to develop a clear framework for taking focused action.

Once the *Framework* had been drafted, the next step was to confirm which parties would take responsibility for supporting the Framework and ensuring its implementation. On April 21st, 2008 MTSA, COTA, and TBC signed a Letter of Understanding to contribute to the resources and leadership necessary to move forward. The next day 51 tourism leaders gathered in Vancouver to attend the second Green Tourism Forum to provide valued feedback and input.

Overview of the Day – Green Tourism Forum II – April 22nd, 2008

Summary of Presentations

Anna Pollock, CEO of Desticorp UK Ltd., and founding member of the Icarus Foundation, presented *The Sustainability Challenge: Implications for Tourism* (available from <https://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism>). Anna's presentation provided a synopsis of the discussion paper prepared for the STWG and made a compelling call to action around climate change and sustainability for the tourism industry. She also stressed the overriding need for a philosophical change in how we view the tourism sector in the future. One of the most thought-provoking ideas is that the tourism industry should shift its focus away from the traditional industrial descriptors of volume, product and market share, to a concept that speaks to interconnectivity, value and overall system health.

Nichola Wade, Executive Director of Carbon Neutral Operations for the provincial government's Climate Action Secretariat (CAS), provided a presentation entitled *Climate Action in British Columbia* (available from <https://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism>). Nichola's presentation began with an outline of the provincial government's target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 33 percent below 2007 levels by 2020 and at least 80 percent below by 2050. Nichola also set out the five strategies that would make this target a reality (regulation, fiscal measures, market mechanisms, support for technology and behaviour change), as well as outlining the \$1 billion dollars in climate action initiatives announced in the government's Budget 2008. These initiatives included a revenue-neutral carbon tax, the climate registry, carbon neutral government, a climate action dividend for all B.C. residents, and offsetting through the Pacific Carbon Trust. The presentation also touched on the economic opportunity presented by climate action, particularly as it relates to the tourism industry.

The morning progressed with messages from Bruce Okabe, Deputy Minister for MTSA and Stephen Regan, CEO and President of COTA. Bruce congratulated the tourism industry on the work that it is doing to address sustainability and climate change, but cautioned the industry to ensure against 'green wash.' As Bruce pointed out, B.C.'s sustainability strategy must be transparent and verifiable. Stephen spoke about the role that COTA and its membership have played and will continue to play on the road to sustainability. Stephen also shared some of the lessons learned by undertaking the Foresight Project.

Following lunch, Dave Butler, Director of Sustainability with Canadian Mountain Holidays Inc., COTA board member, and co-chair of the BCSTC, presented the STWG's *Sustainable/Green Tourism in BC: Sustainable/Green Tourism in BC: A Framework and Plan for Action* (available from <https://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism>). The presentation began with a recap of the events that led to the development of the Framework, including MTSA's Tourism Action Plan, COTA's Foresight Project, GTF I and the strategic advice received from Anna Pollock. The presentation then moved on to describe the key actions and governance framework required to move the tourism industry and government collectively forward with the *Strategy*.

As outlined in the *Framework* document, six key initial actions were presented (in no specific order):

1. Develop and implement the Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability;
2. Develop and track key indicators;
3. Develop tourism actions to address climate change;
4. Develop an incentives program, including certification and a recognition program;
5. Develop a communications strategy; and,
6. Undertake or influence research to answer the outstanding questions.

The governance framework to undertake this work defined the roles of three bodies: The Green Tourism Forum participants, the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and the Sustainable Tourism Secretariat (STS) (working titles only).

The roles of the three bodies were proposed as follows:

1. Green Tourism Forum participants play a visionary role, providing ideas, guidance and ongoing feedback.
2. STSC acts as the overseeing body, providing ongoing direction and leadership to STS, ensuring adequate funding, allocation of future revenue streams and fiscal accountability.
3. STS will initially be comprised of a three-member team: A team leader, a project manager, and an administrative support person. Possibly within COTA, STS will be accountable to STSC and will be responsible for project implementation and delivery. A number of other key organizations, beyond the STSC, will also play an essential role in the supporting or influencing the work of the STS, including CAS, Aboriginal Tourism BC (ATBC), Industry Canada and/or Western Economic Development, Go2, LinkBC, BC Aviation Council and key Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS).

The *Framework* document also set out the next steps to establish the STSC and the Secretariat (refer to section below entitled *Summary of Next Steps*).

Resulting Forum Discussions

Following the *Framework* presentation, forum participants broke into smaller discussion groups. Participants were directed to answer two key questions within their working groups:

1. What is your overall reaction, advice, feedback, or concerns regarding the *Framework* that you would like to pass along to the STWG?
2. What key messages or advice would like to pass along to the STWG?

One individual from each group volunteered to take notes and summarize the group's discussions. For the next 90 minutes, the groups worked to answer the two questions and then reconvened as a group for presentation of thoughts and feedback. The outcome from this activity has been analysed and is presented in the following section.

Summary of Feedback and Input

Overall, there were seven key categories that emerged from the small group discussions, as well as a general category for overall comments regarding the forum:

1. Communication & Education
 2. Framework & Implementation
 3. Challenges
 4. Research
 5. Consumers
 6. Incentives
 7. Measuring & Benchmarking
 8. Overall Comments
- 1. Communication & Education**

The category which received the most feedback from participants concerned the important role that communications and education would play in the development and implementation of a made-in-B.C. *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability*. Many participants stated that this is a perfect opportunity to leverage the *Super, Natural British Columbia*[®] brand, but warned against “green wash.” Participants felt that the message must be clear, succinct, simple and genuine. The message must target all business owners, but particularly small and medium enterprises and front line staff. There was a warning to avoid duplicating the work that has already been done by other groups, and a reminder that it will be important to link with other provinces and national organizations in the strategy.

Participants also spoke about the role education must play as the industry moves forward with sustainability, including the need to reach business owners, communities, the public, visitors and end-users. Participants felt that it is important to educate and create awareness about the kinds of change occurring in society and the natural environment and how the tourism industry must respond through mitigation and adaptation. Many businesses have already adopted sustainable initiatives and many participants felt there was a great opportunity to “get the success stories out there.” Green does not necessarily cost more and as one participant stated, “the economic case for sustainability must be told.”

2. Framework & Implementation

All of the groups discussed issues surrounding the required framework and implementation of the Secretariat. A number of participants suggested a name change (one individual suggested that *action team* was a more appropriate moniker). Participants felt that the Secretariat must have a clear one-to-three year mandate with the full support of government and businesses and, most importantly, the team members must walk the green talk. This action-oriented team should begin with an established set of success indicators and must work collaboratively with the various sectors, local communities, First Nations, academia, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), and other governmental ministries. An on-the-ground toolkit may help this team put the strategy into action, while training workshops will be of assistance to businesses and communities (e.g., ‘train the trainer’ concept).

A number of participants expressed concern that the resources being attributed to the Secretariat are inadequate. It was suggested by a few individuals that perhaps a portion of the carbon tax could be applied to funding the Secretariat. As a number of participants pointed out, the Secretariat must also be sustainable, particularly as it relates to funding if it is to deliver the actions required in the timeframe needed.

With respect to the STSC, it was noted that the current initial member ratio of two government agencies to one industry association needs to be balanced out, if not reversed. Deputy Minister Bruce Okabe and COTA’s Dave Butler both encouraged tourism businesses, associations and related groups to join MTSA, TBC and COTA in investing in this project.

3. Challenges

All of the participant groups discussed the challenges that will face B.C.’s tourism industry with respect to sustainability, including the apparent dichotomy of the provincial government’s goals of growing tourism revenues, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It was also acknowledged that tourism often encroaches on ecosystems, but many noted that without those ecosystems the tourism industry would not exist. One participant stressed that we cannot lose sight of our “natural capital,” while another pointed out that a significant percentage of the world’s pollution is related to tourism-related activities. Participants acknowledged that policy will play an essential role in ensuring that the ‘three-legged stool’ (environment, economic, social) remains balanced.

Although the issue of taxation, particularly as it relates to the transportation sector will be a challenge, so will the issue of double taxation. Some participants expressed concern that the carbon tax and offsetting programs could amount to a form of double taxation. Policy will be required to ensure that social issues, as well as economic and environmental issues are addressed.

The diversity of the tourism industry, including its various stakeholders, was seen to be another challenge for the industry as it moves forward with the *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability*. Participants felt it will be challenging, but nonetheless essential, to gather all of the key players at the table, and most specifically local governments, ENGOs, social NGOs, First Nations, and the technology sector.

4. Research

Research was recognized to be an important component of B.C.'s sustainability strategy. Participants acknowledged that there are a number of key research areas to be analysed, including technology and innovation, particularly as it relates to transportation. Participants would also like to see research undertaken regarding footprint calculators, offsetting pros and cons, and what other jurisdictions are doing in order to establish best practices that could be applied here in B.C.

5. Consumers

A number of participants discussed the importance of understanding customer's decision making, particularly as it relates to sustainable tourism experiences. Some questioned whether customers will pay a premium to offset more costly sustainable operating practices. But as one participant noted, a customer who experiences a sustainable tourism experience may implement some of those practices at home, creating a "lasting greater benefit." There was general agreement that even though the few surveys undertaken show relatively low consumer awareness to date, consumer demand for "green" experiences and travel will grow significantly in the next few years.

6. Incentives

Incentives, for both business and customers, are seen to be an essential part of garnering support for and implementing a sustainability strategy. Participants discussed the need to establish and communicate a set of tangible benefits that may include incentives such as enhanced marketing exposure, retrofit financing, taxation credits and other savings that would be passed along to businesses. As one participant suggested, "lay out [the] carrots for the industry." Carrots are essential for getting both business and customers to participate in a sustainability strategy and will encourage businesses to "surpass the baseline," as another participant pointed out.

Participants also discussed the need to provide incentives to customers to encourage their participation in a sustainability strategy. An effective set of incentives for both businesses and consumers will help to ensure that sustainable practices become the industry standard.

7. Measuring and Benchmarking

The need for measurement and benchmarking was a theme that was common to both the first and the second Green Tourism Forums. Participants stressed that there will be a need to provide indicators of success not only for the tourism industry, but also for the Secretariat which will begin the task of implementing the strategy. The metrics should be understandable and achievable and help to gauge the level of success.

8. Overall Comments

A number of comments were received from individuals regarding GTF II. Overall, participants were pleased to see the progress that had been made from the first Green Tourism Forum held in October of 2007. A few participants stated that they were pleased to see the involvement of the Climate Action Secretariat and the David Suzuki Foundation and the federal government, as represented by Industry Canada and Parks Canada. As one individual stated, "It feels like we're finally getting over the talk." In this regard a number of individuals simply commented "get it done," or "get moving."

Many participants expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts of MTSA, TBC and COTA in moving the industry forward collectively with a sustainability strategy. Participants welcomed the opportunity to attend the forums and look forward to future forums, where they can continue to provide feedback, understand the challenges, hear about the successes and see tangible progress. However, a few participants expressed a desire to see more of the smaller operators involved in future forums.

Summary of Next Steps

As mentioned above, the *Framework* document outlined the next steps required to move forward with establishing a dedicated team focused on developing a Strategy, with supporting actions and outputs. In particular, the following action items are listed in descending order of immediacy:

- Determine and define the terms of reference for the STS, including job descriptions and work plan, and its governing Steering Committee.
- Finalize budget and funding/support commitments
- Identify and recruit STS members
- Establish a home for the STS team and initiate work
- One-year review, determine commitment to two or more subsequent years of activity

Recognizing that a detailed work plan will not be set out until both the STSC and STS are in place, the forum participants did discuss action areas that need to be undertaken, including:

- Develop and implement the *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability*;
- Develop a web resource centre
- Identify and engage sub-committees
- Develop a research agenda
- Develop and track key indicators;
- Develop a tourism strategy and actions to address climate change
- Develop communications / outreach agenda
- Develop green/sustainable tourism certification program, including business/employee workshops and a business to business mentorship program

Conclusion

GTF II built upon the success of the first Green Tourism Forum and work of the STWG, providing an effective platform for dialogue and feedback on the *Framework* and the *Strategy* in British Columbia. Overall, forum participants indicated a strong level of agreement and support for the presentations and particularly for the *Framework*. Presentations by Anna Pollock of Desticorp UK Ltd. and Nichola Wade of CAS helped to lay the foundation for the day, providing the necessary background information regarding the urgency of addressing climate change under the overarching umbrella of a sustainability strategy for B.C.'s tourism industry.

In the coming months, the STWG will soon be reorganized into the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee. This committee will be comprised of the key funding partners who will provide direction and leadership to STS as it sets about implementing the *Strategy*. Additionally, funding support and partners will be finalized, a budget will be established and the Secretariat will be staffed and deployed under the guidance of the STSC.

Once the STSC and STS are in place, the team will immediately be tasked with implementing some of the necessary initial actions to begin moving forward on British Columbia's *Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability*. Part of those tasks will include engaging small and medium sized operators, as well as tourism employees. In the spring of 2009, a third Green Tourism Forum will be hosted to provide an update on the progress and tangible achievements of STS.

In closing, MTSA, TBC and COTA would like to thank all of those individuals who donated their time and energies to the STWG, ensuring that the goals of the Working Group were achieved. Additionally, sincere thanks are extended to the leaders from B.C.'s tourism industry, government and other organizations who attended the Green Tourism Forum II on Earth Day 2008 and took the time to provide their comments and candid feedback on the *Framework*. We look forward to your continued input on our journey towards sustainability.

Appendix A – GTF II Participants’ Listing

1	Rollie Back	BC Aviation Council
2	Brenda Baptiste	Aboriginal Tourism BC
3	Chris Bottril	Capilano College
5	Dave Butler	Canadian Mountain Holidays
6	Mike Cafferky	Perimeter Transportation (Whistler Express)
7	Michelle Carr	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts
8	James Chase	BC Hotel Association
9	Arthur DeJong	Whistler/Blackcomb
10	Suzanne Denback	King Pacific Lodge
11	Dave Duncan	Ministry of Transportation
12	Teresa Ehman	Air Canada
13	Katie Emery	Tourism Vancouver
14	Morgan Geisler	BC Centre for Tourism Innovation & Leadership
15	Ron Gibson	Clayoquot Wilderness Resort
16	Greig Gjerdalen	Capilano College
17	Rogier Gruys	Canadian Tourism Commission
18	John Hansen	North West Cruise Ship Association
19	Cheeying Ho	Smart Growth BC
20	Sara Holland	Tartan Communications & BC Ferries
21	Mohan Kang	BC Taxi Association
22	Joe Kelly	BC Aviation Council; Academia
23	Peter Larose	BC Council of Tourism Associations
24	Ray LeBlond	Tourism British Columbia
25	John Leschyson	go2 HR
26	Evan Loveless	Wilderness Tourism Association
27	Alison Manley	Parks Canada
28	Ruth Marr	Marr Consulting
29	Tori Meeks	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts
30	Bruce Okabe	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts
31	Stephen Pearce	Tourism Vancouver
32	Joss Penny	BC Lodging & Campgrounds Association
33	Anna Pollock	Icarus Foundation/DestiCorp
34	Richard Porges	Tourism British Columbia
35	Steve Regan	Council of Tourism Associations
36	Trevor Robinson	Tourism Vancouver Island
37	Samantha Scholefield	Canadian Restaurant & Foodservices Association
38	Valerie Sheppard	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts
39	John Stibbard	Capilano Group of Companies
40	Lee Thiessen	Ministry of the Environment
41	Ian Tostenson	BC Food & Restaurant Association
42	David Tsui	Industry Canada
43	Kevin Volk	Ministry of Transportation
44	Rebecca Vossepoel	Vancouver, Coast and Mountains
45	Nichola Wade	Climate Action Secretariat
46	Dave Waldron	David Suzuki Foundation
47	Peter Walters	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts

48	Jody Westbury	Tourism Whistler
49	Eric Williamson	North Van Green Tours
50	John Willow	Ministry of Tourism Sport & the Arts
51	Catherine Wong	Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre
52	Michel Maurer, Facilitator	Strategy & Organization Alignment

Appendix B – Agenda

GREEN TOURISM FORUM II

April 22nd, 2008, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Segal Graduate School of Business
500 Granville Street, Vancouver, B.C.

A G E N D A

Facilitator for the Day: Michel Maurer, Strategy & Organization Alignment

10:00 a.m. Welcome, introductions, and objectives for the day

10:20 a.m. The Sustainability Challenge: Implications for Tourism

- Presentation by Anna Pollock of Desticorp and the Icarus Foundation, followed by a facilitated discussion on a progressive way to view the relationship between tourism and sustainability.

11:05 a.m. B.C. Government's Green Agenda and What It Means For Tourism

- Graham Whitmarsh, Head of the Climate Action Secretariat (CAS) will talk about the role of CAS, key initiatives, and the implications for tourism, followed by an opportunity for open dialogue

11:25 a.m. Progress Updates from Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA) and the Council of Tourism Associations (COTA)

- Bruce Okabe, Deputy Minister of MTSA, will provide an update on progress made since the Green Tourism Forum I held in October of 2007
- Stephen Regan, COTA's CEO and President will speak about lessons learned from Foresight and highlight key industry successes
- Peter Larose, COTA's Director of Policy and Planning will provide a B.C. tourism industry perspective on the carbon tax

12:00 p.m. Lunch break and networking opportunity

12:45 p.m. Recap of morning discussions by Michel Maurer

12:50 p.m. A Progressive Plan for Action

- Dave Butler, on behalf of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group partners, will present a joint framework and plan for taking action.

1:10 p.m. Moving Forward (Group Discussion)

2:40 p.m. Next Steps

2:45 pm. Closing Comments by MTSA and COTA

Appendix C – The Framework Document

Sustainable/Green Tourism in BC: A Framework and Plan for Action

A.) Introduction and Background

This document has been prepared as a discussion piece for BC's Sustainable Tourism Working Group and for tourism industry leaders at Green Tourism Forum II. Its primary purpose is to set the context, and to act as a road map for putting sustainable, green tourism into practice in BC.

There are two key and complementary documents which form the foundation for this work:

- COTA Foresight project – this set out a vision for sustainable tourism in BC by describing a scenario now known as “BC Uncorked.” In this scenario, visitors get the best possible experience while they're in BC, and businesses experience the most stable possible operating environment.
- BC Government's Tourism Action Plan – one of the top 8 actions in this plan is to “leverage our “Super, Natural BC” branding with a new, world-class Green Tourism Strategy for sustainability.”

In October of 2007, a group of 42 tourism industry leaders met in Vancouver in a first “Green Tourism Forum;” this was a turning point for BC. The group collectively strategized a greener, more sustainable tourism industry in the province (refer to GTF I report).

A Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG) was formed after the Green Tourism Forum to kick-start detailed action planning. The STWG consists of:

- BC Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (John Willow and Valerie Sheppard)
- Tourism BC (Ray LeBlond)
- Council of Tourism Associations of BC (Stephen Regan, Peter Larose, Dave Butler)
- BC Sustainable Tourism Collective (Ian Robertson)
- Industry Canada (Philip Fleming)
- BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association (Joss Penny)
- BC Hotels Association (James Chase, Alan Sacks)
- BC Climate Action Secretariat (joining STWG as of April 7)
- Anna Pollock (strategic assistance on contract).

This document lays out current thinking and describes next steps.

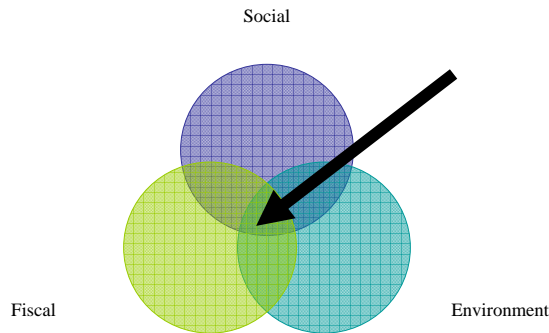
B.) Vision and Scope (What do we need to do?)

Based on the two documents above, the first Green Tourism Forum and subsequent detailed work undertaken by the STWG and Anna Pollock, an operational-level vision is proposed for the project at hand. In essence, it translates the work to-date into a description of what success will look like in the future.

A sustainable, green tourism sector in BC is:

- *prepared for and is readily adapting to change*
- *addressing the needs and aspirations of present and future generations*
- *promoting and encouraging ethical behaviour in all stakeholders, including visitors*
- *recognizing the connectivity of the entire planet*
- *promoting the long-term health and well-being of visitors, suppliers, employees, host communities, and the natural and built environment*
- *promoting long-term socio-cultural and economic viability of the tourism*

It is critical to understand that this project is about sustainability from a tourism perspective. Ideally, the project will focus on specific strategies and actions which truly hit the “sweet spot” where fiscal, social and environmental components of tourism overlap (see figure below). In some cases, project initiatives will integrate these three components in a vertical way (such as with a certification program) whereas others will integrate these in a horizontal manner (such as in addressing climate change).



In order to achieve the project vision, it has become apparent (based on the work done to-date) that specific priority actions and tactics are necessary. In keeping with the shift in view that tourism is more akin to an interconnected system (not unlike an ecosystem) than it is to a conventional linear/hierarchical business sector, these efforts but can be broadly placed into four main categories (as per Anna Pollock’s working paper for the STWG): (1.) envision (imagine, predict, visualize); (2.) enable (facilitate, remove barriers, provide structure); (3.) encourage (support, persuade, promote); and (4.) exemplify (demonstrate, illustrate, show, epitomize, embody). Appendix 1 is the original frame-work which flowed from Green Tourism Forum I. The framework and actions in the sections that follow are the STWG’s recommendations for putting the broad direction from Appendix 1 into practice “on the ground.”

The key actions necessary to achieve the project vision include:

(i.) Develop an Overarching Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainability

This will set out the principles and goals for tourism sustainability in British Columbia, encompassing the action plan, governance and leadership needed to ensure BC is recognized as a world leader in sustainability and is a top “green” destination. As an element of the BC Tourism Action Plan and flowing from COTA’s FORESIGHT initiative, this strategy will ensure the people, companies and organizations that make up BC’s tourism system will benefit from inspired and shared leadership, true collaboration and coordinated action for decades to come.

(ii.) Develop and Track Key Indicators

- a. Identify a set of proxy indicators against which the project’s progress can be measured over time, and by which BC’s progress can be bench-marked against competing jurisdictions. These can be pulled from Foresight, GTF I, Anna Pollock’s paper for the STWG, and UNEP/WTO documents.
- b. Develop a system to track those indicators moving forward

(iii.) Develop and Implement Tourism Actions to Address Climate Change

- a. Carbon foot-printing at sector and company levels (tools, education)
- b. Mitigation and adaptation strategies
- c. Carbon off-setting (e.g. build understanding of Pacific Carbon Trust, and potential role and value of it for tourism)

(iv.) Develop Incentives Program

- a. Green, Sustainable Tourism Certification for BC

- i. build on what has already been done, both in BC and elsewhere
- ii. link to Super, Natural BC brand
- iii. engage ENGO's to build transparency and credibility
- iv. ensure value for participating businesses and associations

b. Reward/Recognition

- i. develop an enhanced reward and recognition program (build on existing Foresight and TBC award program) at provincial level and through RDMO's and DMO's
- ii. develop an industry mentorship program around sustainability
- iii. explore government role in building value for businesses – taxation, regulations, incentives or?

(v.) Communicate

- a. Use regular COTA Council meetings to communicate with tourism businesses and associations about specific actions
- b. Develop and maintain web-site/resource centre (obvious opportunity to link with LinkBC's TORC)
- c. Communication to industry and visitors about overall provincial approach to sustainable tourism

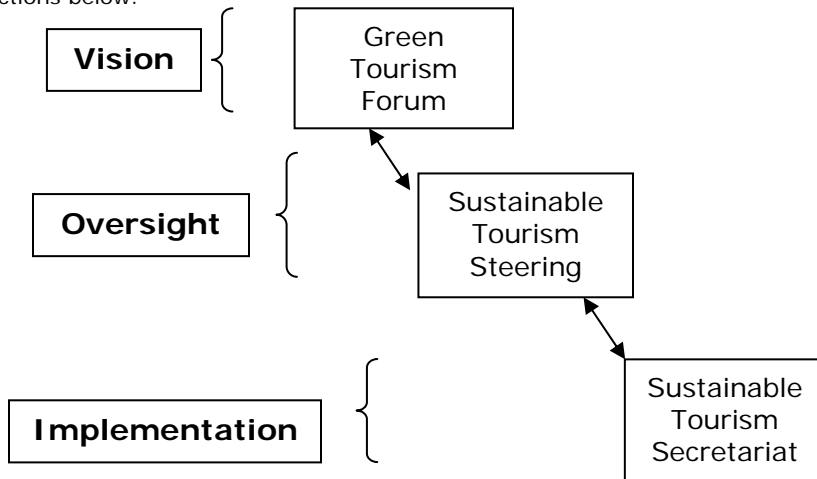
(vi.) Answer Outstanding Questions Through Research

- a. Work with soon-to-be-formed BC Tourism Research Advisory Council (BCTRAC) and *LinkBC* partners to identify and coordinate priority research.

C.) Proposed Framework (How do we make this happen?)

With an understanding in place of what is to be done, it is then necessary to consider how this will occur.

From a frame-work perspective, it is suggested that a project of this nature needs three primary levels: vision, oversight and project implementation. Those levels are shown graphically below, and described in detail in the sections below:



(i) Project Vision and Oversight

Participants in Green Tourism Forums, which includes senior leaders from government and key tourism stakeholders, will continue to provide ideas, question assumptions and identify challenges and opportunities at the strategic level. On a regular basis, this group provides on-going guidance and feed-back, answering

the following kinds of macro questions: is the project on the right track? how is the project doing in the context of progress against key indicators? what's coming at tourism in BC of which we should be aware (such as new initiatives in competing jurisdictions)?

The Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee is a smaller sub-set of the current Sustainable Tourism Working Group which will include COTA, MTSA, TBC and other major funding partners up to a maximum of 7. It provides on-going project direction and leadership to the Sustainable Tourism Secretariat. It ensures on-going commitment of key players, ensures funding is and remains in place, and encourages overall project efficiency and effectiveness. It also monitors and connects with relevant initiatives and policy work, and ensures that the activities of key agencies and organizations - as they relate to the implementation of the action plan - are as much as possible coordinated and complementary. The Steering Committee will also make decisions on the allocation of future revenue streams that may flow from the project (such as certification fees, workshop registrations, etc).

(ii) Project Implementation – The BC Sustainable Tourism Secretariat

Based on discussions to-date, it is clear that a small team of passionate, knowledgeable and persuasive people must lead, drive, deliver and be accountable for this project in order to achieve success on the ground. It is too complex and too important to be done off the corner of desks. It must be undertaken with a clear and laser-beam-like focus on achieving demonstrable results within a relatively short time-frame to prove the approach and build value for all participants. Ultimately, this must lead to credible results that provide value to businesses and organizations, and focus on constant improvement.

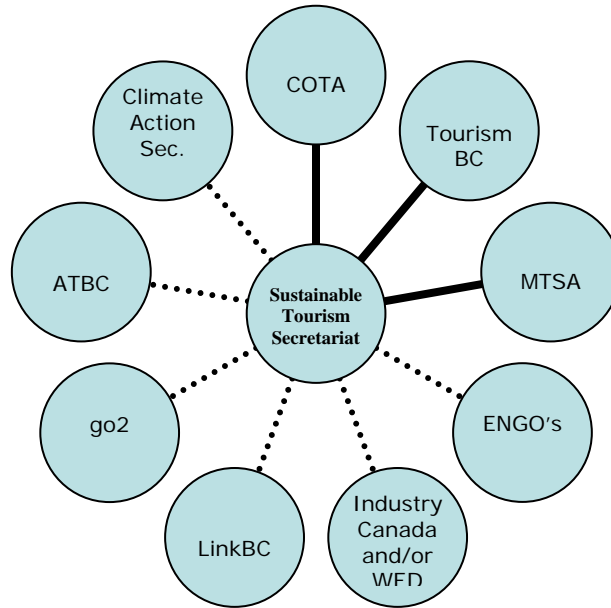
We propose the creation of a “**sustainable tourism secretariat**”⁵ as the primary level of project development and implementation. **The Secretariat will be accountable to and receive broad project direction from the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee.**

This secretariat will need to include, or have direct access to the following skill sets: leadership, significant understanding of tourism (business and government), project management, significant technical knowledge around sustainable tourism, communications, IT and the web, monitoring, and the ability to get things done in a complex, sensitive and ever-changing environment.

The three main players that link to the secretariat are the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, Tourism BC and COTA (see bold lines in figure below). Additional partners will be added through additional sources of funding.

In reality, the framework around the Sustainable Tourism Secretariat involves a broader range of stakeholders than just the three noted above. Dotted lines denote a role that may involve funding partner (in the overall project or for specific actions) or participation on working groups (or sub-committees) for specific actions. Beyond each organization listed here, there would be another ring of organizations to which each links. For example, MTSA is the main conduit to the provincial government, and will link other Ministries and agencies of government to the project (e.g. Ministries of Environment, Transportation, Economic Development, etc.). Tourism BC will link with the Regional DMO's and DMO's. TBC will be responsible for linking with CTC (where necessary), for communicating to visitors about the standards being developed and for integrating those standards with marketing activities. COTA will be the primary link to the tourism industry through its many association and business members. COTA will also be responsible for linking with TIAC (where necessary) on initiatives such as TIAC's tool-kit project (ideally, this might be a first step toward some form of consistency across Canada). LinkBC would connect with universities and colleges throughout BC.

⁵ Sustainable Tourism Secretariat ... Sustainable Tourism Action Team?



a. The BC Sustainable Tourism Secretariat – Resourcing and Structure

This approach is based on best available knowledge as of today, but it needs to be flexible, adaptable and relatively nimble. It is anticipated that a project of this scope and importance requires an initial budget of at least \$300,000 per annum. This is necessary to cover salary costs and administrative support (office, travel, contracting) for one senior (visionary, reputable and results-oriented) team leader, at least one project manager and a technical/administrative position (for a total of three positions). Building this initial team for the Secretariat can be done by either secondment(s) from government or other organizations, direct hiring of individuals for the Secretariat, or some combination of both. While there will be a short period of ramping up, an initial commitment to at least one year of direct and in-kind funding from Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee members is critical to kick-start the project. An agreement to review the project for an additional two-year term based on the results of the initial 12 months is suggested. As the project plan rolls out, Steering Committee partners may determine that additional resources are required to deliver on that plan.

Perhaps the most pivotal lesson learned from COTA’s FORESIGHT project was that strategic, pan-industry initiatives should be housed in a permanent institution or organization. This would not only foster continuity in strategic directions and in the implementation of operational-level initiatives but would help to bolster the permanent capacity of an organization such as COTA. The STWG considered options including housing the secretariat in government, in TBC, in an academic institution or in an industry organization such as COTA. It is proposed that the Sustainable Tourism Secretariat be housed as a separate unit under the umbrella of COTA. **However, the Secretariat will be accountable to the Steering Committee.**

COTA is in the midst of increasing its capacity with a renewed focus on engagement with, and building value for members. In light of the foundation set by FORESIGHT and the priority which government and business are placing on sustainable tourism, this provides a significant opportunity. Housing the Sustainable Tourism Secretariat within COTA will require a degree of “re-engineering” of the administrative structure of the organization; this is now under consideration by the COTA Board. One – 1.5 of the positions in the secretariat could come from COTA if resources are available to back-fill to allow focus on the many other priorities that COTA must continue to undertake. COTA is also considering new office space (in conjunction with industry partners) to allow for a more efficient approach.

Much of the necessary project communication between the Secretariat and key stakeholders can occur through communication by Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee members, and by the Secretariat itself building on COTA’s outreach activities. Regular COTA Council and member meetings (to be held at various locations around BC) will be a key part of on-going communication and outreach both for the project as a whole and for specific project actions. For example, a carbon foot-printing workshop for associations and businesses could be held just prior to, or just after each regional COTA Council/Board meeting.

It is proposed that the Secretariat, COTA and LinkBC would work together to develop a web-based resource center focused strictly on sustainable tourism. Project updates, tool-kits, key links to other web resources, etc can be housed in this resource center. This is another important communication tool.

It is also suggested that each member of the Secretariat will lead one or more of the specific actions (see B. (i) – (vi) above) through direct implementation, contracts or use of issue-specific sub-committees. For example, the Secretariat might work with MTSA, TBC, CTC, COTA, LinkBC and the soon-to-be-formed BC Tourism Research Advisory Council (BCTRAC) to develop and undertake the research agenda associated with the project.

D.) Next Steps and Timelines

Some of the most critical next steps for undertaking the action plan include the establishment of the governance framework and confirmation of available resources (additional actions are also offered for illustration):

Actions to Establish Secretariat	Timeline
Finalize action plan and detailed Terms of Reference for Sustainable Tourism Secretariat	Before GTF II (April 22)
Finalize budget (salaries, administration, office space, travel, etc) and preliminary funding commitments from partners	By GTF II
Obtain direction, confirmation and (financial) support for proposed direction and team	At GTF II (April 22)
Confirm support structure and team and commitment levels required	May 2008
Develop job descriptions for Secretariat	May 2008
Develop a draft work plan with primary actions, timelines and deliverable expectations for the new Secretariat team.	May 2008
Identify/recruit potential secretariat members with initial focus on team leader	May/June 2008
Place secretariat members in new roles and initiate work	June/July 2008
Announce BC's progress on sustainable tourism (such as a new green, sustainable certification program?) at Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference	October 2008
One year review point; review progress and determine commitment to subsequent two years	April 2009

Examples of specific actions that would be undertaken by the Secretariat as soon after creation as possible include:

Examples of Specific Secretariat Actions
Develop web resource center with COTA and TORC
Identify and engage sub-committees
Develop research agenda
Work with BC's Climate Change Secretariat to develop action items for addressing climate change
Develop and implement communications/outreach plan
Research and work with relevant partners to develop green, sustainable tourism certification program for BC
Identify/plan for revenue streams that may flow from this work (such as workshops or certification program)

Appendix 1 - Overall Framework for Developing a Sustainable Tourism Industry

