



**Council of
Tourism Associations
of British Columbia**

**Foresight: Shaping and Sustaining
a Vision for Tourism in BC**

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Foresight: Shaping and Sustaining a Vision for Tourism in BC

When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened. John M. Richardson, Jr.

Executive Summary

The Council of Tourism Associations, its members and the industry at large present the project “Foresight: Shaping and Sustaining a Vision for Tourism in BC”.

This is an ambitious two-year project aimed at creating a vision, strategy and action plan for the BC tourism industry in the macro sense as it moves towards sustainability. On one hand it is a business plan for the future. On the other, a sustainability policy and set of best practices that will assist the industry in achieving that future.

Foresight has assembled a Task Force of industry leaders, and representatives of tourism companies who have already shown a commitment to sustainability. This group of leaders will advise and oversee the project as it moves through its component parts.

The project is comprised of five component parts: one, is the establishment of the Task Force and vision of the project; two, will focus on defining a future strategy; three, creates a body of research around Codes of Ethics, sustainability policies and best practices; four, the creation of a measurement/recognition tool for tourism operators; and five is the creation of the final integrated strategy.

A key piece of the project is the creation of scenarios for the future through an intensive two-day workshop with industry and government leaders. This process is a unique forward planning methodology that will enable us to create a number of likely scenarios for the future. This key element will merge with the development of sustainable practices policies now that will assist the industry to move forward and greet the future with more certainty.

The project plans to utilize the following contractors to bring it in on time and on budget. They are:

1. Barnes and Jeffries: possessing skills and education in sustainability planning and implementation, Patricia Barnes will provide overall project management
2. Elevate Consulting: a team of specialists in business planning, change management and sustainability, Elevate will provide the bulk of research, facilitation, and strategy development for the project.
3. Britannia Consulting: specializing in scenario planning, Ian Leask will lead the industry in creating well formed scenarios for the future, and identify the “most likely scenarios”.

The final product of the project will be a strategy, integrating the most likely scenarios to reach BC’s tourism vision for the future, indicators and milestones, plus a sustainability policy for the whole industry as well as best practices for individual operators. The best practices will, for the course of this project identify universal best practices, to be addressed by tourism operators regardless of the sector.

Introduction

The Council of Tourism Associations (COTA) is the *Voice of the Tourism Industry*. Comprised of some 57 tourism associations and major businesses from across the province, COTA represents an industry of 18,000 businesses employing 117,000 people.

At its meeting in February 2005 COTA's membership reviewed COTA's Vision 2005–2012 proposal. Part of that proposal spoke to the creation of a **plan for the future**, one that would engage the industry in a forward thinking exercise that would build preparedness for an uncertain future.

In addition, the COTA Board of Directors has identified the need for the industry to create a belief system with values that would form the core of a **sustainability policy and best practices** for the BC tourism industry. The social, cultural, economic and environmental context in which we live is key to the tourism product that makes BC so appealing in the global marketplace.

To address these two directions, COTA has assembled a Task Force of industry leaders (list of Task Force members is at the end of this document), and established a vision for the initiative and a definition of sustainability for moving forward.

Vision of the Initiative:

In defining a vision to strive for, the Task Force asked itself this fundamental question: How will the world have changed as a result of the tourism industry undertaking this project?

Our vision is of an industry that has the tools in place that allow it to adapt to change. It will be an industry adept at planning to embrace the changes that the future will bring. At the same time, the industry will use best practices to ensure its own sustainability and the sustainability of the environment in which it operates.

Therefore our approach to the initiative will integrate two aspects:

Aspect 1: Planning to Embrace an Uncertain Future:

The tourism industry is composed of many sectors that are affected by the greatest and the smallest of environmental, economic, cultural and social forces in which it operates. In order for the industry to be successful in an uncertain future, it must practice foresight. By identifying the forces that direct industry change and by envisioning the potential scenarios that change brings, we can reduce uncertainty by leading and controlling change through the creation of strategies for the future that prepares the industry, encouraging it to welcome and embrace change. The end result will be a broadly-based business plan for the future, engaging sector, single business and marketing plans that are currently in place and/or in process, assessing gaps and creating a macro plan for the industry.

Aspect 2: Planning to be Sustainable:

At the same time, tourism is conscious that it is itself one of the forces that exert pressure upon the social, natural, cultural and economic environment. Its tools, practices and ultimately its very existence must contribute to the sustainability of the world around it so the industry too will survive. By creating a common value and belief system around

sustainability, along with industry-wide best practices, the industry will begin to move towards the necessary balance to ensure success over the long term.

Value of Foresight to the Tourism Industry

One has only to look at the year 2003 and the unforeseen events that took place during the year that dropped overall tourism spending from \$9.2 billion in 2002 to \$8.9 billion in 2003. Fires, floods, pine beetle, SARS, BSE, the US economy and the war in Iraq were the principle causes for the downturn. Although good planning does not alleviate the unforeseen, it will ensure that the industry is prepared to change course or put measures into place to assist its on-going sustainability, and protect the fragile bottom line of small business operators.

The number of companies instituting sustainability policies and hiring sustainability officers is increasing in BC. Companies such as Rocky Mountain Vacations, Canadian Mountain Holidays, Fairmont Hotels and Grouse Mountain Ski Resort are creating such policies and hiring staff to keep them alive. These are successful enterprises with one eye on the future and another on the bottom line. In short, these visionary companies know that the future success of their businesses relies on their abilities to act and plan sustainably.

Creating a value-driven labour climate in the tourism industry will assist the labour-intensive industry attract and retain skilled workers. Young people entering the workforce are presented with completing options as BC's tourism industry lines up with many other industries and the public service for skilled workers, in the context of demographic and social realities that see fewer young people in the workforce in the future. In establishing economic, environmental and social best practices plus a vision of the future, the industry will be able to offer new and transitional entrants with opportunities to be part of something they value.

Over the next five years for example, the Tourism Human Resource Strategy predicts that BC's tourism industry will grow by 85,000 new jobs in addition to the existing 117,000 jobs.

Industry Ownership

As the industry organization representing the 18,000 tourism businesses in the province, COTA is best positioned to organize and lead this project. However, this is not enough to ensure that the industry buys in to the goals of the project, and the action plan that results.

Foresight will be based upon on-going reference and consultation with the industry. The project includes three interactive industry workshops, plus a series of regional workshops. At each stage of the project, industry consultation is key through focus groups, surveys, personal meetings and telephone interviews. In addition, a website will be set up, linked to the COTA website, upon which information and surveys will be mounted.

Scenario Planning Workshop, January 18 and 19, 2006

This workshop will involve an invited group of "extraordinary people" who will be tasked with creating a series of scenarios for the future. These individuals will be given an overview of tourism industry "drivers" at the beginning of the workshop, the result of intensive research during December and early January. The results of the workshop will form the basis of a scenario report, which will be the basis of the next workshop to take place at the Tourism Industry Conference in Penticton on the 15th of February.

Tourism Industry Conference, 2006

Involving the full number of delegates at the TIC, which last year numbered 650 people, the workshop will make use of technology to have the delegates rate the drivers and the scenarios that have been created in the January workshop.

Regional Workshops, Fall 2006

To ensure that the project has regional buy in, the project will be workshopped in each of the 7 tourism regions of BC. These workshops will explore the drivers, scenarios and the draft sustainability policy with operators.

Tourism Industry Conference, 2007

At this workshop, the delegates will engage in a dramatic presentation that is both entertaining and educational to explore the “most likely scenarios”, action plans, sustainability policy and best practices.

First Nations Involvement

BC’s first peoples are an intrinsic part of the tourism industry, and are expected to play a larger part as the industry moves forward into the future. Aboriginal Tourism BC has developed a blueprint for the future, which is due to be implemented in the near future. Foresight will support, reference and underline the Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint as the two projects develop side by side.

Aboriginal leaders and elders will be an important component of the consultation choreography developed and undertaken for the Foresight project. Sustainability is a core value amongst most aboriginal peoples, who are very closely connected with the land and its resources.

Context of Foresight

The Foresight Project has been initiated in the context of many other planning and sustainability initiatives that are either completed or underway in the world around it. These include policies or programs that exist in other countries, states, provinces, tourism sectors and individual businesses. The COTA project intends to research and learn from such initiatives, and if they are BC based, reference them in the final product.

Examples include:

Forward Planning:

1. YVR Master Plan 2027
2. Tourism Vancouver Business Plan (and other DMO plans)
3. Province of BC, Tourism Sports and the Arts 2015 Plan
4. Tourism BC 2015 Marketing Plan
5. Tourism Industry Human Resources Strategy
6. Aboriginal Tourism BC’s Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint

Code of Ethics:

1. Tourism Industry Association of Canada Code of Ethics
2. BC Wilderness Tourism Association Code of Ethics

Sustainability Policies and Best Practices:

1. Individual tourism businesses, such as Canadian Mountain Holidays, Grouse Mountain and Kicking Horse Resort, Whistler Blackcomb and Fairmont Hotels
2. International initiatives, such as the Sustainability Stewardship Council
3. Sustainable Tourism initiatives in other jurisdictions such as Costa Rica, New Zealand

Goals of the Project

The goals of the project are as follows:

1. Articulation of a vision of the future of the BC tourism industry;
2. Adoption of an industry code of ethics for sustainability, as a reinforcement of the national policy, creating a framework for a sustainability policy.
3. An articulated sustainability policy for the BC tourism industry, including economic, social and environmental sustainability elements;
4. Identification of key social (including cultural), economic and environmental change drivers that will affect the industry in the future;
5. Creation of scenarios that could exist in the future, given the variability of tourism's drivers;
6. Identification of milestones that will signal movement toward specific scenarios;
7. Identification of key measures that operators individually and the industry as a whole must take to embrace change and sustainability (articulated in an industry-wide business plan);
8. Creation of measurement/reward/recognition tool(s) (see below) to enable individual industry members to assess and provide proof of their success in achieving sustainability;

Scope of the Project

The project will cover the province of British Columbia, reflecting the mandate of COTA. This includes the membership of COTA, and their members reflective of 18,000 tourism businesses in the province.

The project will take place in the following parts, which will not necessarily progress in sequence, and will involve on-going consultation with the Foresight Task Force at all stages. The work plan (below) will determine the sequence of activities.

Part 1: Creating a Vision and Laying the Groundwork

This phase of the project will focus on establishing a project vision. It will also be a time of setting up the systems needed over the course of the project and defining the terms of reference and scope of Phase 2 of the project. It will consist of the following:

1. Drafting a vision statement for the project in a facilitated workshop with Task Force members
2. Seeking feedback from the industry through electronic consultation
3. Finalizing the vision and publishing it on the COTA website
4. Finalizing the Sustainability Task Force Members (including business and organizations with planning and/or sustainability practices in place or in progress, as articulated above)
5. Drafting and approving the project's Terms of Reference
6. Tendering out a contract for professional services to the project
7. Establishing a work plan and detailed budget for the project
8. Confirming crucial milestones of success
9. Obtaining funding partners.

Part 2: Industry Consultation and Research – Future Strategy

1. Contracting services for project support, project management and scenario planning
2. Developing a communications strategy
3. Researching social, cultural, economic and environmental drivers and change influencers affecting the tourism industry and how each one motivates and impacts the industry as the future unfolds.
4. Creating and implementing two planning workshops with the tourism industry: one, with a group of selected tourism leaders and other stakeholders to formulate scenarios for the future; and two, with the delegates at the Tourism Industry Conference to present and strategize around these scenarios.
5. Creating a discussion paper on the most likely scenarios, backed up by quantitative research around the probability of each one.

Part 3: Industry Consultation and Research – Code of Ethics, Sustainability Policy and Best Practices

1. Creating a body of research on tourism sustainability policies, measurement tools and best practices on a global basis, including direct benefits back to the industry as a result of these practices (to create a body of research to support a business case).
2. Establishing benchmarks for current sustainability practices and performance indicators of the BC tourism industry (through industry surveys, etc.) at both the micro and macro level, along with performance goals.
3. Establishing a system by which progress towards goals is collected and measured against desirable outcomes.
4. Implementing a visual presence on the website that tracks industry performance towards goals.
5. Publishing a research paper on sustainability policies and best practices to be distributed to the industry, including reporting out on benchmark indicators and benefits to the industry
6. Facilitating a workshop or series of regional or provincial workshops on research and on sustainable practices and their practical benefits.
7. Publishing a draft sustainability policy and universal best practices for BC, including tourism sustainability indicators.
8. Formation and publication of an integrated strategy (business plan), combining a vision for the future, indicators of progress towards a future state (as well as indicators of danger), utilizing practices that sustain the industry's social, economic and environmental context.

Part 4: Creation of a measurement/reward/recognition tool for individual tourism operators

1. There is a wide array of potential measurement and/or reward tools that will enable tourism operators to add their tool chests as evidence of their success in achieving a level of sustainability. The project will explore a variety of options, including:
 - Certification programs
 - Quality assurance programs
 - Awards
 - Eco-efficient purchasing programs
 - Self-reporting management and monitoring systems
 - Arm's length auditing programs
 - Stakeholder partnership programs
 - Education programs

The project will explore the merits of different approaches, assessing such aspects as the costs of development and delivery, implementation strategies and challenges associated with each, marketability (receptiveness, willingness to participate, ability to pay), etc.

2. Integration of implementation plan for tool, with future vision, sustainability policy/best practices etc. in a final report.

Part 5: Creation and Implementation of the Integrated Strategy

1. Final signing-off on a long-term business plan (beyond 2027), including a sustainability policy for the BC tourism industry, by industry representatives, the Task Force and the COTA Board of Directors
2. Creating an operational plan for COTA moving the industry forward
 - Determining specific objectives and tactics for moving the industry forward under each of environmental, social and environmental goal areas
 - Assigning mileposts to each by which progress can be determined
 - Assigning roles and responsibilities to each objective area
 - Determining and moving towards outcomes
3. Continuing communications activities with stakeholders to ensure on-going ownership

Project Deliverables

1. A sustainability policy for the BC tourism industry.
2. An overall vision for the future of the BC tourism industry.
3. Industry Code of Ethics for Sustainability (tied to the national policy).
4. Articulated visionary scenarios of the future tourism industry, and indicators of what will drive the industry toward each.
5. An integrated strategy for moving the industry towards the realization of the overall vision, recognizing the potential scenarios and their signals as we move toward the future, and roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, and including the Code of Ethics, Sustainability policy and universal best practices.
6. Reports/ discussion papers (the number depends on the nature of the information that is gathered, and how the information lends itself to packaging), including the following information:
 - Research on drivers
 - Research on sustainability policies and practices (includes Codes of Ethics)
 - Most likely scenarios for the future, and the indicator signposts
 - current sustainability practices (benchmarks)
 - performance indicators
 - performance goals
 - vision, strategies and action plans
7. An interactive website which: 1) allows the industry to track its overall progress (or lack of progress) against benchmarks toward sustainability; and 2) allows individual tourism operators to track progress towards best practices and confirmation as the Action Plan is implemented.
8. A measurement/reward/recognition tool that reinforces sustainable best practices by individual tourism operations.
9. A Communications Strategy and the deliverables contained therein which would ensure that the industry and stakeholders have an opportunity to engage in the project at all phases.

10. Three or more workshops involving the tourism industry, two of which are created in conjunction with the Tourism Industry Conference 2006 and 2007. Plus, additional consultation methodologies with the industry as a whole, such as surveys, focus groups, etc.

Foresight Task Force Members

Chair, Petrus Rykes: Owner/Operator, Eagles' Nest Resort, Anahim Lake

Project Leader: Mary Mahon Jones, Chief Executive Officer COTA

Industry Partners

Rick Antonson, President and CEO, Tourism Vancouver

Brenda Baptiste, Aboriginal Tourism BC

Graeme Benn, Regional Director, Sales and Marketing, Pacific Northwest Region, Fairmont Hotels

Dave Butler, Director of Land Resources, Canadian Mountain Holidays, Former Board Member Wilderness Tourism Association, Tourism Action Society of the Kootenays

Gord Burns, Owner/Operator Mountain Magic Ventures, Former Board Member Wilderness Tourism Association, Past Chair, Tourism Action Society of the Kootenays

James Chase, CEO, BC and Yukon Hotels Association

Linda Coady, Vice President Sustainability, Vancouver Organizing Committee, 2010 Olympics

Geoff Dickson, Vice President, Marketing and Retail Services, BC Ferries

Dave Donaldson, Dean of Hospitality, Vancouver Community College

Graeme Drew, Executive Director, Cruise BC (invited)

Terry Hood, Executive Director, BC Centre for Leadership and Innovation in Tourism

Mike Matthews, Project Coordinator, YVR 2027 Master Plan study (invited)

Stuart McLaughlin, President, Grouse Mountain Resort, Kicking Horse Mountain Resort

Don Monsour, Hospitality Associates

Dr. John Nightingale, Director, Vancouver Aquarium

Beverley O'Neil, President, O'Neil Marketing & Consulting (Aboriginal tourism)

Richard Porges, Chief Economist, Tourism BC

Ian Robertson, Director, Sustainable Development, Rocky Mountaineer Vacations

Deane Strongitharm, City Spaces Consulting

Tina Symko, Sustainability, VANOC

Peter Williams, Director, Centre for Tourism Policy and Research, SFU

Paul Vallee, Executive Vice President, Tourism Vancouver

Government Partners

BC Ministry of Tourism, Sport and Arts
Deputy Minister, Virginia Greene (or designate)

Western Economic Diversification (Canada)
Ardath Paxton Mann, Assistant Deputy Minister, Western Region (or designate)

Stakeholders Advisory Committee (to be formed)

This committee will be composed of COTA members, interested environmental non-government organizations, suppliers, other industry organizations, academics, mayors and councilors, governments, and any others who have an interest in the tourism industry. The committee will come together twice a year to be updated on the project's progress and to contribute feedback to the process.

Service Providers

Barnes and Jeffreys (project management)

Patricia Barnes

Possessing a M.Sc. in Environmental Decision Making, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainability Decision Making, Patricia Barnes has experience both in the UK and Canada in international standards, sustainability management and sustainability reporting systems.

Elevate Consulting (background resources and facilitation)

With foundational specialties in strategic planning, business planning, performance measurement and evaluation as well as change management, Elevate has created a service team that includes a sustainability specialist. The key team members include the following:

Bill Reid, MBA, CMC (lead consultant)

Previously employed by the BC government, Grant Thornton LLP and KPMG, Bill specializes in strategy and performance management, business planning, internal audits and has carried out risk assessments using such tools as the logic model and Balanced Scorecard. Amongst his accomplishments is collaboration on guidelines for the integration of sustainability strategies, measures and objectives for the BC government.

Rob Abbott

A Certified Management Consultant and an accomplished speaker on sustainability and green business, Abbott has worked with businesses, governments and NGO's around the world to help them "unpack" sustainability and make it real. Rob is a former practice leader with Coopers and Lybrand and Golder Associates, and is the creator of Abbott Strategies. He is also a co-founder of MindStream, an Australian-based company focusing on transformation and an Associate Faculty member at Royal Roads University, teaching sustainability and social entrepreneurship.

Stirling Fraser

With a Masters Degree in Environmental Science, and Diplomas in Water Quality and Business Administration, Fraser brings 16 years of Environmental Management. He recently worked with the BC Heliski and Snowcat Operators Association to develop and conduct a sustainability best practice gap analysis and implementation strategy. He has successfully completed the AA100 Sustainability Reporting Assurance Standard course in 2004, and is in the final stages of attaining his Certified Environmental Auditor designation.

Jae Cooper

Jae will be responsible for conducting select interviews and providing analysis support to the project. Serving as a Chief Operating Officer and Chief Marketing Officer in highly successful firms, he has extensive experience in assisting organizations in the cultural adoption of information systems and processes.

Britannia Consulting (scenario planning)

Ian Leask

Ian Leask specializes in scenario planning, a process that he has developed over many years of practice. Former clients include Whistler Blackcomb in a process that contributed to the development of Plan 2014. Ian will prepare, facilitate and report on the scenario planning workshop in January.

Work Plan and Milestones

The proposed work plan is as follows:

Proposals for consultation due	September 21, 2005	Project Leader
Interviews of Short listed Bidders	November 10, 2005	Selection Committee
Project Application forwarded to potential funders	November 30, 2005	Project Leader
Hiring of Project Manager	December 1, 2005	Project Leader
Contracts awarded	November 25, 2005	Project Leader
Communications Strategy completed	December 15, 2005	Barnes and Jeffreys
Research on Drivers complete and circulated to first workshop delegates	January 15, 2006	Elevate
Scenario Workshop with Invited members of the Tourism Industry and other stakeholders	January 23-24, 2006	Barnes and Jeffreys with Britannia
Brief discussion paper re scenarios out to TIC delegates	February 3, 2006	Britannia
Second drivers/scenario workshop at Tourism Industry Conference	February 15, 2006	Barnes and Jeffreys and Britannia
In depth consultation with the tourism industry (phone and in-person interviews, etc.)	March - June	Elevate
Research into sustainability policies, practices, benchmarks, benchmark indicators and measurement tools, etc	March - June	Elevate
Launch of website with software to show industry progress against benchmarks and toward performance goals	June (followed by on-going updating to end of project and beyond)	COTA
Discussion paper published (includes research on drivers, most likely scenaria and performance)	April 1, 2006	Elevate

Publication of report to industry on sustainability research, drivers/change influencers and most likely scenarios for the future	June 1, 2006	Elevate
Consultation Period with Industry on content of publication (per survey on website)	June - Sept 2006	Barnes and Jeffreys
Draft One Code of Ethics Due	August 1, 2006	Elevate
Regional Workshop(s) with industry on scenarios, COE sustainability policy and best practices	Sept – Dec 2006	Project Leader and Barnes and Jeffreys (may involve COTA Board members)
Draft One Sustainability Policy Due	January 1, 2007	Elevate
Presentation/workshop of Integrated Strategy	February, 2007 (TIC)	Elevate
First Draft of Measurement Tool	March 31, 2007	Elevate
Consultants' report(s) and recommendations for action	April 2007	Elevate
Consultation on report recommendations with industry/stakeholders	May-June 2007	Barnes and Jeffreys
Final recommendations to COTA Board	September 2007	Task Force
Communication of integrated strategy to the industry	September – Dec 2007	Barnes and Jeffreys
Completion of an operational plan for COTA	October 2007	Barnes and Jeffreys
Project completed	December 2007	