

BRITISH COLUMBIA RESORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BC Resort Strategy supports growth of British Columbia's all-season resort industry

British Columbia has launched an aggressive new strategy to encourage growth in British Columbia's \$1.9 billion resort-tourism sector.

The goal is to expand business opportunities, attract investment to existing and new resorts, grow the industry and create local jobs – all while continuing to protect the natural beauty that underlies almost all of British Columbia's tourism.

Resort tourism in BC ranges from enormous facilities like Whistler/ Blackcomb to small family-owned fishing lodges and eco-tourism outfits.

Together BC's 700 resorts and lodges employ 26,000 people. Many are year-round and cater to high-end markets.

In addition to its own revenues, economic impact of the industry includes another \$2.1 billion in related spending. The resort sector contributes \$178 million to governments (federal, provincial, municipal) coffers each year.

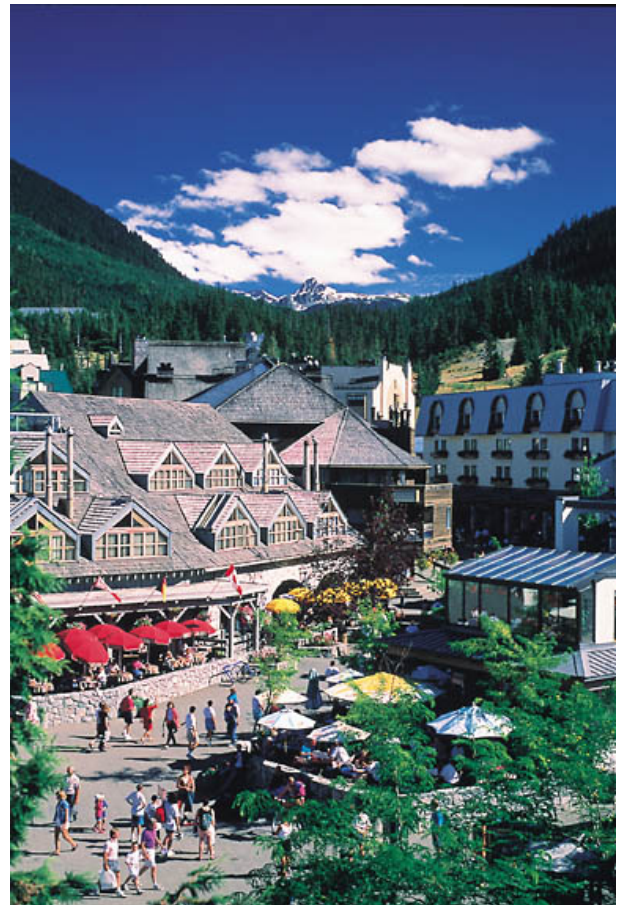
As impressive as these numbers may be, the province believes the market can support both growth and new product development at existing resorts while welcoming proposals for new resorts in British Columbia

Worldwide tourism is a \$6.1 trillion business. The tiniest little shift in world market share can bring enormous benefits to a regional economy like British Columbia.

Growth in BC's resort tourism does not depend entirely on the provincial government – entrepreneurs need to be bold, imaginative and clever; local governments need to nurture growth; First Nations need to participate and the world economy needs to be doing well. At the same time, the provincial government does have influence over a) economic climate, and b) the process for making land-use decisions.

In 2003, Premier Gordon Campbell set up the ***BC Resort Task Force***. In spring 2004 the Task Force brought forward ***recommendations*** on how the province, local governments, First Nations and industry could support the growth of resort-tourism in British Columbia.

The provincial government responded to the recommendations by developing a ***British Columbia Resort Strategy***. This strategy establishes government's priority objectives for supporting growth in the resort sector.



Background:

BC Resort Task Force created framework for BC Resort Strategy

The *BC Resort Strategy* is the province's response to the recommendations of the *BC Resort Task Force*.

Task Force – background and activities

A fifteen member Task Force was drawn from industry, local government and First Nations. The Task Force, originally chaired by Honourable Kevin Falcon and later by Honourable Sandy Santori, who became BC's first Minister of State for Resort Development, was supported by a working group of senior management from 11 different provincial agencies.

In developing a vision for expansion of BC's resort industry, the Task Force was guided by the following principles:

- sustainability
- dynamic, responsive adaptability
- action-orientation
- regionally informed and responsive
- harmonized with other initiatives

Ministers Falcon and Santori toured the province on a fact-finding missions and consulted resort owners, local governments, First Nations and local business development organizations, developers, investors, and interest groups.

Task Force findings – consultations

Six main themes emerged from the 400 issues identified during consultations:

Certainty and efficiency needed in the application process, such as better-defined criteria and transparent and simplified policies.

Local government needs earlier participation.

Infrastructure and transportation investments are required to encourage resort growth.

Marketing needs to become more aggressive, and more comprehensive – highlighting *all* regions of the province.

Human resource challenges in recruiting skilled staff and seasonal turnover. Employee services, such as health facilities, day care and housing, are also at the forefront of human resource issues.

Regulatory framework – a more flexible regulatory framework. Regulations need to be harmonized to reflect unique traits of resort communities.

Task Force findings – studies

The Task Force commissioned a number of studies:

Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges: Grant Thornton identified dozens of strengths and opportunities as well as some challenges.

Land and marine-based application processes: Grant Thornton's studies identified the policy and legislative maze faced by resort proponents seeking approval from provincial/federal/ municipal/regional/First Nations' governments.

Inter-jurisdictional comparison: City Spaces Consulting compared resort development in BC to six other tourism economies in North America and beyond. The comparison highlighted the complexity of approval in BC, and illustrated the benefits of early-on "approval-in-principle."

Supply and demand analysis: The Economic Planning Group identified four trends in resort development:

- diversification of leisure activities;
- blending of resort and residential communities;
- increased role for First Nations;
- diversification of target markets.

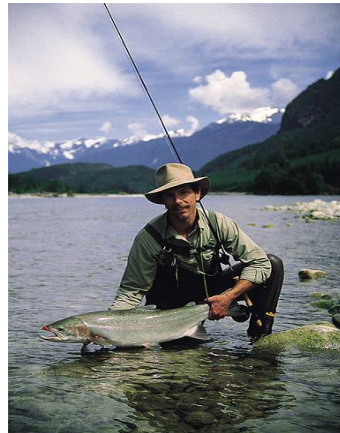
Task Force – recommendations

The Task Force – responded to the themes that emerged during consultations with recommendations directed at government, industry and communities.

The full text is available in the *Recommendations of the BC Resort Task Force – 2004 Report*.

Key areas covered by the recommendations include:

1. Achieving greater certainty and efficiency
2. Resolving land-use conflicts
3. Increasing First Nations involvement
4. Increasing certainty for financiers
5. Moving Towards Sustainability
6. Developing a Resort Transportation Strategy
7. Building more transportation infrastructure
8. Encouraging resort clusters
9. Making regulations more flexible
10. Working together to develop new opportunities
11. Marketing
12. Recruiting investors
13. Human resource needs
14. Helping resort communities develop



BC Resort Strategy and Action Plan: Provincial government's response to recommendations from the BC Resort Task Force

The recommendations from the **British Columbia Resort Task Force** spoke to several audiences: industry, municipalities, First Nations and the provincial government.

From the recommendations, the provincial government recognized five strategic directions which would strengthen and attract investment into the resort sector. The ***British Columbia Resort Strategy*** recognizes that expansion of existing tourist resorts in the province and the development of proposals for new resorts requires the following actions to facilitate sector growth. The Action Plan details the actions and initiatives that Ministries and Agencies are undertaking to implement the Strategy.

The five components of the British Columbia Resort Strategy are:

1. Maintain and Enhance British Columbia's Competitive Edge in Resort Development
2. Increase Resort Development
3. Support Resort Communities
4. Improve Transportation Infrastructure
5. Build First Nations Partnerships

These strategic directions are in keeping with the Government Strategic Plan and the objectives of the *Spirit of 2010 Tourism Strategy, International Trade and Investment to 2010 Strategy* and *A Human Resource Strategy for British Columbia*.

1: Maintain and Enhance British Columbia's Competitive Edge in Resort Development

Actions:

- Land and Water British Columbia Inc. to act as the central agency to provide consistent delivery by:
 - coordinating all applications for development on Crown land to streamline resort development decision making
 - establishing a new transparent application process for resorts with established timelines and specific outcomes in July 2005
 - developing an All Season Resort Policy in May 2005 to support all resort type facilities
 - working with the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management to extend Crown Land tenure terms
- Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development to implement marketing initiatives targeted to investors and resorts consistent with the International Trade and Investment to 2010 Strategy.
- Develop an investment plan to see all British Columbia resort opportunities marketed globally
- Encourage postsecondary institutions to train for tourism/resort communities

Outcomes:

- Integrated provincial review process
- Economic climate that encourages and facilitates resort investment through a coordination and harmonization of resort applications.
- Security to obtain financing from institutions.
- Highly skilled and trained workforce to maintain the quality experience
- Recruitment of new investors

2: Increase Resort Development

Actions:

- Support expansion plans through a New Master Development Agreement
- Direct marketing to investors and visitors through partnerships with Tourism BC to develop regional, national and international campaigns and leveraging opportunities associated with the Olympics
- Use market research, product opportunities, and branding provided by *Spirit of 2010 Tourism Strategy*

Outcomes:

- Increase in resort expansions to all-season
- Increased and more dynamic marketing programs

3: Support Resort Communities

Actions:

- Carry out Sequencing Project
- Develop best practices for developers, local government, communities
- Work with UBCM on linkages between communities and resort developers
- Consider future changes to legislation to support transition from “resort” to “resort community”

Outcomes:

- Best Practices Guide to help resort communities and developers understand each others needs
- Expedient processing of permits and licenses by local government
- Early community involvement in resort development plans

4: Improve Transportation Infrastructure

Actions:

- Work with the tourism sector to set strategic transportation priorities (e.g.):
 - improve highways
 - expand regional airports
 - improve ferries and terminals
 - third-party passenger tourist trains
- Continue review and updating of highway signage policy

Outcomes:

- Improved transport means more visitors
- Greater access to resort locations
- Improved packaging and marketing abilities for resort owners

5: Build First Nations Partnerships

Actions:

- Develop guide to assist developers in developing partnerships with First Nations (Spring 2005)
- Identify and work with First Nations interested in resort development

Outcomes:

- Increased First Nations participation in resort sector
- Increased certainty for investors and developers