

**The Opportunity:** Acquire \$1.25 million dollars of additional funding to promote the Sunshine Coast as a travel destination over the next 5 years

**The Goal:** Increase tourism revenues to all communities on the Sunshine Coast

- Attract more visitors
- Increase length of stay & dollars spent during stay
- Significantly increase spring and fall revenues

**SUNSHINE COAST TOURISM  
STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
2015-2019**

**How would the new funds be used?**

- Television exposure in Vancouver, Calgary and Vancouver Island markets
- Strong focus on shoulder season marketing
- Targeted sector marketing for mountain biking, boating, hiking, and motorcycle touring
- Feature the region as a wedding destination
- Build travel trade relationships in Germany, Switzerland, UK and The Netherlands
- Chinese language website content & marketing campaigns in the Lower Mainland
- Attend multiple consumer shows each year (i.e. Vancouver & Calgary Outdoor & Adventure, West Coast Women's Show, Northwest Women's Show)
- Increase media relations efforts
- Actively pursue small to medium conferences
- Improve signage and brochures for natural assets (i.e. Sunshine Coast Trail, Dakota Ridge, Powell Forest Canoe Route)

Destination BC announced its new three year marketing strategy in November 2014. "Our target consumers most connect with the unique combination of ocean, rainforest and mountains in BC, as well as the stunning natural beauty and wildlife." Destination BC has identified 5 iconic experiences that showcase those aspects of BC in a compelling way: Canadian Rockies, *Rainforests*, Cities in Wilderness, *Ocean Coast*, and Ski. Destination BC has defined key trip-motivating travel experiences as: *Touring & Exploring*, City Stays, *Outdoor Adventure*, Skiing, *Aboriginal Cultural Tourism*, Cruise, Wine Touring, *Golfing* and *Fishing*. International marketing campaigns will highlight these areas. The Sunshine Coast can leverage its strong positioning in the highlighted experiences.

Three Unique Selling Propositions that set the Sunshine Coast region apart from other regions such as Victoria, the Okanagan, or Whistler have been defined and considerable effort should be made so that all marketing and media relations efforts tie back to those three points.

1. A string of rural, ocean-side communities
  - a. This is not a metropolitan area. Slow down & escape from the city.
  - b. There are many communities to explore, each with their own character.
  - c. The Pacific Ocean is here on our doorstep alongside stunning scenery
2. Outdoor Adventure
  - a. Super Natural British Columbia is our attraction, not a supermall or a structured venue
  - b. Hike, bike, sail, paddle, golf, dive, swim, climb, ski, ride...your adventure starts here surrounded in natural beauty
  - c. A partnership of land and water activities and natural attractions
3. Arts, Culture & Heritage
  - a. Home to three First Nations who have a remarkable story to tell & continue to develop
  - b. Historic Townsite – national heritage district as well as our forestry and fishing heritage

- c. An amazing concentration of artists in all genres who live and work and are inspired by place
- d. Festivals and events celebrating a range of interests all year long

### **Who would handle the funds & make marketing decisions?**

Sunshine Coast Tourism (SCT) would receive the funds into a separate and audited bank account. SCT's staff would authorize specific expenses within a marketing plan and budget that will be previously approved by its board of directors. SCT's board is elected annually by its members and specifies regional and sectoral representation within its bylaws. Evaluation metrics will be reported to the tourism sector for review and feedback. In addition to current metrics, MRDT becomes a performance indicator itself reflecting hotel room revenues by month.

### **Where does the money come from?**

The Sunshine Coast would opt into the British Columbia program called the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT). Approximately 50 communities in British Columbia collect MRDT which is also known as the 'additional hotel room tax'. This is a tax of 2% which is charged on sales of taxable accommodation and is collected by accommodators at the same time they currently collect 5% GST and 8% PST. The consumer pays the tax. The entire reason behind the MRDT program is so that individual communities can promote their local tourism industry.

### **Who gets to decide whether this happens?**

After careful consideration by SCT's board, it was approved unanimously that to be competitive in the marketplace attracting visitors to the Sunshine Coast, the marketing budget needed to be increased and the best option for sustainable funding would be the MRDT. The next step is to collect approval and signatures from a majority of the accommodation sector, both by number of properties and by number of rooms, to approve the additional consumer paid tax. Final steps would be gathering support letters from local governments and submitting the whole package to the Ministry of Finance.

### **How long does the program last?**

BC requires that the program be implemented for a 5 year period. At the end of this period, the program will be reviewed by all stakeholders and the region can decide whether to continue the program with a renewal application. The accommodation sector must once again show its support.

### **How is Sunshine Coast Tourism currently funded?**

\$ 55,000 industry memberships and marketing programs

\$ 40,000 local governments

\$ 20,000 provincial grants

Total budget - \$115,000 per year

### **How is local government involved?**

Sunshine Coast municipalities and regional districts must provide letters of support to the provincial program application. The new funding would be in addition to existing tourism investments made by our local governments. Local government offices would not handle dollars received through the MRDT.

### **What other communities in our area participate in this program?**

Courtenay, Mount Washington, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Nanaimo, North Vancouver Island, Squamish, Whistler, North Vancouver, Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Victoria, Tofino, Ucluelet, Langley, Abbotsford, Chilliwack as well as most communities in the Okanagan.

- In other words, all of our neighbours are outspending us attracting visitors to their communities