

September 23, 2016

New tourism strategy launching this fall for Campbell River

City Council has approved a new tourism strategy that includes a five-year marketing plan and a nine-member advisory committee. A call for tourism industry representatives to volunteer on the TAC (Tourism Advisory Committee) will be issued later this fall, and a request for proposals for professional tourism marketing services will be issued soon.

The new strategy will promote year-round tourism opportunities and build on community partnerships to enhance visitors' experiences. The goal is to raise awareness of Campbell River as a destination of choice and to increase the number of visits and longer stays in the community.

"Representatives of the tourism industry, Council and the broader community have all confirmed the importance of creating a vibrant, year-round visitor economy that generates jobs, increases revenues for businesses and contributes to local quality of life," says Mayor Andy Adams. "We also recognize the significant economic, arts and cultural contributions of local First Nations and are working to ensure this new tourism strategy is a collaborative initiative that will also enhance and promote First Nations tourism."

The new strategy includes increased funding for marketing through a local hotel tax, which was supported by the majority of local accommodation providers.

"The City of Campbell River has applied to the Province to implement a three per cent tax on bookings for local hotel/motel rooms to raise additional revenue to support tourism initiatives. Conservative estimates on annual funding generated through a local hotel tax is in the range of \$250,000, an important boost for local tourism promotion," says Mayor Adams. "Campbell River is one of the last communities on Vancouver Island to generate this source of revenue, which will expand our capacity to market and promote Campbell River. This new additional funding will come from visitors rather than local taxpayers, and the City will continue to contribute \$250,000 annually for local tourism marketing, programs and projects."

The new tourism strategy was developed over the last six months with extensive input from interested community members, accommodation providers, tourism operators, arts/culture/heritage organizations, business improvement areas and partners such as BC Parks, the Chamber of Commerce and neighbouring communities. Opportunities for community consultation included drop-in open house events, workshops and an online survey.

"All of Council appreciates the many members of our community who shared their ideas. All the feedback helped ensure the plan we have now is the best model for tourism services delivery in our community, a plan customized to the unique needs and circumstances of Campbell River," the Mayor adds.

"This new plan is grounded in market research and the aspirations of Campbell River's business owners and residents. It builds on the work by Tourism Campbell River & Region staff, whose dedication carried us through the peak 2016 season, and whose work will wrap up Dec. 31," says city manager Deborah Sargent. *"We know the coming year will also be busy, and planning is currently underway to host the 2017 Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities and the Vancouver Island Sustainable Technology Association conferences. We are also working in collaboration with the Wei Wai Kum and We Wai Kai First Nations on hosting the BC Elders Gathering and the 2017 Tribal Journeys."*

The nine-member Tourism Advisory Committee will make recommendations on marketing investments. Members will be chosen based upon relevant skills and expertise through an application process to the City of Campbell River.

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