



Demonstrating Commitment to the Regional Team Approach in the Comox Valley

Tangible Outcomes: Inter-Governmental Liaison Group;
Planning & Engineering Collaboration Protocol



2009 Vancouver Island Learning Lunch Seminar Series

Comox Valley is Demonstrating the Regional Team Approach

Water Bucket Web Story posted November 2009

Regional Team Approach

A **regional team approach** is founded on partnerships and collaboration; and seeks to align actions at three scales – provincial, regional and local. The key word is alignment: **this is what we want to collectively achieve, and this is how we will work together to get there.**

"How we will simultaneously work together as staff within a municipality and as a region AND externally with the stewardship sector, developers and other private sector players, to ensure we implement sustainable approaches to development"

"The Comox Valley is the designated provincial pilot for implementation of a 'regional team approach' becausea convergence of interests has created an opportunity for all the players to set their sights on the *common good*....challenge the old barriers of jurisdictional interests, and make sustainability real," states



Glen Brown, Executive Director with the Ministry of Community & Rural Development.

"Three regional strategies....growth, sustainability and water....provide the backdrop for the 2009 Comox Valley Learning Lunch Seminar Series. The spotlight is on **how to implement the regional team approach**

- that is, a unified approach from all levels of government," continues **Kevin Lorette, General Manager** of the Comox Valley Regional District's Property Services Branch.



Demonstrating Commitment

"The Learning Lunch Series comprises three seminars, but the three events by themselves represent the tip of the iceberg when compared to the total investment of time and effort by the four Comox Valley local governments and the other partners," explains **Kim Stephens, Program Coordinator** for the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia and team leader



"The exploratory conversations began in January 2009, curriculum development was initiated in April, and the Comox Valley organizing team has been meeting on a regular basis ever since. From the beginning, the four local governments have been looking ahead to 2010, and what they want to achieve through collaboration."



"The theme, **Getting Ahead of the Wave**, describes what we wished to accomplish via the 2009 Series," adds **Kevin Lagan, Director of Operational Services** for the City of Courtenay.

"The 2009 Series is the springboard to advance integration of current Comox Valley regional initiatives in 2010: *what all the plans will achieve.*"

Getting Ahead of the Wave:

An Integrated Watershed Approach to Settlement Change

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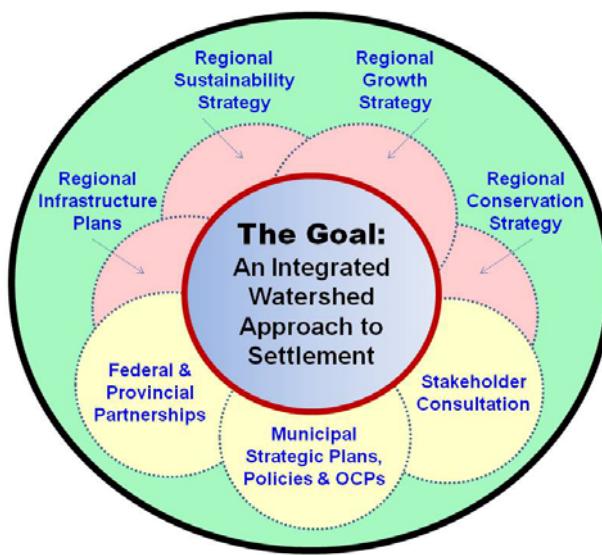
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Tangible Outcomes

Through a collaborative process, the four Comox Valley local governments have defined the goal of a regional team approach to be **An Integrated Watershed Approach to Settlement Change**. To achieve the goal, the process has crystallized two tangible outcomes that the four local governments will carry forward into 2010:

- **Comox Valley Inter-Governmental Engineering/Operations Liaison Group**
(note: to be known by the acronym "CV-OPS")
- **Comox Valley Planning & Engineering Collaboration Protocol**
(note: pursuant to the implementation plan for the Regional Growth Strategy)

"Both were introduced at Seminar #2, and both will be the subject of further discussion at Seminar #3," notes **Kim Stephens**. "They are very much works-in-progress. A key message is that these tangible outcomes are grounding the regional team discussion by keeping the spotlight on practical, next steps."



Inter-Governmental Liaison Group (CV-OPS)

"It is timely to form a Comox Valley Inter-Governmental Liaison Group in view of the various regional and municipal infrastructure studies and projects that are underway," states **Kevin Lagan**. "This is not a new idea. In the past we had an operations group that met on a regular basis."

"Although specific advisory groups have been established to provide technical oversight for the Regional Water and Regional Sewerage strategies, those groups have a specific focus on individual infrastructure services. The purpose of the Inter-Governmental Liaison Group is to implement a broader, collaborative approach to servicing of existing and proposed developments and coordination of inter-municipal engineering and operational projects."

"The full name of the inter-governmental group is a mouthful," notes **Shelley Ashfield**, an engineer with the Town of Comox. "So the four local governments have decided to go with the acronym **CV-OPS** to emphasize the operational nature of the engineering function."

Planning & Engineering Collaboration Protocol

"CV-OPS would become a stepping stone to a Planning & Engineering Collaboration Protocol," observes **Kim Stephens**. "Simply put, the Collaboration Protocol would describe how planners and engineers in the Comox Valley intend to work together. Their objective is straightforward....it is to integrate the land use and infrastructure perspectives."

"Recognition of the need for a Collaboration Protocol was an 'Ah-Ha' moment in one of the working sessions in between seminars. The Comox Valley team was discussing the Regional Growth Strategy and the **Memorandum of Understanding on Interim Management of Planning & Development Initiatives**."

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Conversation leads to Consensus:

According to Stephens, it was a matter of recognizing the obvious:

- *How can a front-end decision process about land use and infrastructure be truly informed when the planning perspective is at the table, but not the engineering perspective?"*

"This disconnect is not unique to the Comox Valley. In my experience, it is a universal theme. To paraphrase the quote from Rudyard Kipling: *Planners are Planners, and Engineers are Engineers, and sometimes it seems never the twain shall meet."*

"Yet, one of the outcomes of the Learning Lunch Series is that the planners and engineers in the Comox Valley are talking to each other, they are listening to each other, and they are developing a

To Build Trust & Respect,
It Starts with a Conversation.

Listen, Listen, Listen.

Because...

Conversations →
will lead to Dialogue →
will lead to Consensus

common language. It has been fascinating to observe the transformation over a period of many months. It starts with a conversation, and conversation leads to dialogue which leads to consensus."

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):

"The MOU was a great move for the valley, and resulted in a Technical Advisory Committee, better known by the acronym TAC,"



stated **Judith Walker, Planner** with the Village of Cumberland, during the Town Hall Sharing Session at Seminar #2. "The MOU meant that for the first time all the planners were working together."

"During our Learning Lunch meetings, the engineers have said they also should be part of this, not just the planners. Now we are trying to figure out how to have a planning and engineering TAC. It does not matter if this is mandated or not. It is where we are going... and what we need to do."

"Updating the Official Community Plans is the next step after the Regional Growth Strategy. We will have to start implementing in each of the four jurisdictions. It sure would be great to have the combined TAC to do this."

