



#201A - 2435 Mansfield Drive
Courtenay, British Columbia,
Canada
V9N 2M2

info@islandcoastaltrust.ca

250-871-7797

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ICET TO FUND REGIONAL TOURISM STRATEGY

Strathcona Regional District, ICET partner on region-wide tourism plan

CAMPBELL RIVER - With some of Canada's most stunning tourist destinations, the Strathcona Regional District is about to discover how a coordinated, regional tourism strategy could drive economic growth.

Through its Economic Development Readiness Program (EDR), the Island Coastal Economic Trust is partnering with the Strathcona Regional District to develop a strategy for a regional tourism service. Each agency is contributing half of the total project cost of \$37,048.

Regional collaboration and the creation of lasting strategies to attract investment and grow existing businesses are key components of the Trust's EDR program.

"The experience in many other regions shows that working together through a regional tourism strategy makes sense," ICET Chair Phil Kent said. "The SRD has a range of tourism assets that, when marketed as a whole, are greater than the sum of their parts."

The Strathcona Regional District includes communities from Oyster River to Gold River, Sayward, Tahsis, Zeballos and Kyoquot and also includes Quadra, Cortes and the Discovery Islands.

"We've got world-class marine tourism, backcountry lodges, First Nations culture and history, some of the best sport fishing on the planet and year-round recreation at Strathcona Provincial Park," said SRD Chair Ted Lewis, Mayor of Zeballos. "It's time to put our efforts together and help boost the tourism opportunities in all of our communities."

The project will see a consultant work with each of the communities and the regional district to determine the overall economic benefit of current tourism activity, identify the special needs of community-based, rural, and First Nations tourism, and detail how the SRD could fulfill a role as the coordinator and funder for a regional service.

With a completion date of January 31, 2014, the project will include consultation with elected officials, First Nations, tourism leaders and other stakeholders.

The final product will include a report and workshop to communicate findings, development of a regional tourism service model, and cost-benefit assessment.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$47 million for over 100 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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For further information:

Mayor Phil Kent, ICET Chair
City of Duncan
Tel. 250-709-0186
mayor@duncan.ca

Line Robert, CEO
Island Coastal Economic Trust
Tel. 250-871-7797 Extension 227
line.robert@islandcoastaltrust.ca

Russ Hotsenpiller, CAO
Strathcona Regional District
Tel. 250-830-6703
rhotsenpiller@strathconard.ca