

6. NEW BUSINESS

To Council
February 1, 2010

- a) Council Referral - January 11, 2010
RE: BC OCEAN AND COASTAL STRATEGY

The Fiscal and Environmental Select Committee expressed various concerns about the BC OCEAN AND COASTAL STRATEGY as written.

MOVED BY: KAREN BURNS
SECONDED: PATRICIA CUMMINS



That committee member Vicky Husband compile some research and prepare and submit comments to the Chair and committee members for review, prior to forwarding these to Council for the January 27 Council Meeting.

CARRIED

**The comments are attached to the minutes dated January 27, 2010

BC's Ocean and Coastal Strategy: An Overview

At the request of the Fiscal and Environment Committee, I offer the following brief critique of BC's Ocean and Coastal Strategy.

In the committee's brief discussion of this major issue at our January 20 regular meeting, we agreed that the proposed Strategy needs to be turned on its head; that conservation of our ocean and our coast has to be the primary and overriding principle. I have critically examined the draft Strategy document through the conservation lens on behalf of FESC, for our submission to Highlands Mayor and Council. With the limited time available I have also made liberal use of the submission on this issue by Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). A copy of that submission is available at <http://www.cpawsbc.org/node/265>.

An Ocean and Coastal Strategy is long overdue, and we welcome the initiative by the BC government to examine these issues. However, we feel that the priorities as proposed in the draft we were given to review are not in the right order.

Principles

1. The first and overriding principle must be the following:
BC must take strong action to protect and conserve our marine and coastal ecosystems.
2. The second major principle must be to deal effectively with climate change, which threatens to change BC's marine and coastal areas irrevocably.
3. To be effective with any Ocean and Coastal Strategy, BC must work collaboratively with the federal government, particularly with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment Canada, who together have a broad overriding legal mandate for the protection and conservation of our oceans and all marine life. They must be part of the discussion, from the beginning, to ensure ongoing protection and conservation through collaborative management of the BC coast and ocean.
4. Full and meaningful consultation with First Nations communities and all communities, and at the regional and local levels of government, is essential at every stage.
5. The oceans and coastal zones are central to BC's environmental well being, to our economic prosperity, and, fundamentally, to our way of life.
6. Oceans and coastal zones are not biophysically separable from terrestrial ecosystems, and our future sustainability and adaption to climate change requires that we carefully manage and maintain essential land-sea biological processes.
7. In the context of the protection and conservation of our marine and coastal ecosystems, the issues of economic sustainability must be addressed. We support better management of our fishery at the federal level, to ensure sustainable fisheries over the long term. Exploring opportunities for economic development, creating more jobs at the local level, and making smart investments in people, technology and innovation are all good goals. There are many opportunities for sustainable development, including ecosystem-based

management, which is being pioneered in forestry in the Great Bear Forest on the north and central coast.

8. A network of Marine Protected Areas, National Wildlife Areas, and National Marine Conservation Areas are a vitally important tool to protect endangered species and ecosystems. However, it is only one tool: many ocean species move around so that the health of the whole marine and coastal area has to be conserved.
9. Local issues pertinent to the District of Highlands, include the following:
 - Bringing in provincial legislation to deal with derelict boats.
 - Ensuring that protective measures are in place to protect Saanich Inlet and its fossil water system that does not flush well and is subject to risks from pollution.
 - Any proposed large development next to Saanich Inlet must be carefully examined to ensure that the integrity of the Inlet is not compromised.
 - A Marine Protected Area has been proposed for Saanich Inlet; this would be an important tool in protecting the area and the coastline in our municipality.

Threats to the BC Coast and Ocean Ecosystem

Missing from the overview in the proposed Ocean and Coastal Strategy document are the present and future threats to BC's oceans and coast. These are issues that must be addressed in the context of the protection and conservation of BC's marine and coastal ecosystems, our recommended overriding principle.

- 1) Offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling for potential production. (The BC government supports this initiative, which is opposed by the majority of British Columbians.)
- 2) Increased tanker traffic on the BC coast. (The BC government is promoting an oil pipeline from the Tar Sands to the port of Kitimat, which would increase the risk of oil spills from the vastly increased tanker traffic on our fragile coastline.)
- 3) Fish farms. (The impact on wild salmon and the ecosystem has been well documented and there is considerable public will to move to closed containment systems.)
- 4) Climate change. (Changes in temperature and ocean productivity are affecting all life in the ocean, and we are seeing an increase in ocean levels and in frequency of extreme weather events. The growing impact on flow of our rivers due to climate fluctuations and glacier retreat is serious.)
- 5) Independent power projects (IPP's), particularly hydro and wind and in the future, tidal power. (Unless a full, transparent public process is put in place, with a framework to look at what the trade-offs are and if they are publicly acceptable and are truly "green," this debate will continue.)
- 6) Habitat destruction. (This includes impacts on the shoreline, estuarine areas, river areas from extractive industries such as forestry, mining, IPP development, and town and city development, roads, etc., and also pollution issues from many sources.)
- 7) Lack of sustainability in the management of some ocean fisheries in BC. (Some fisheries are showing steep declines; for example, Fraser River sockeye, many of the stocks are considered endangered, Strait of Georgia rockfish are in precipitous decline. Also in serious decline are Strait of Georgia Chinook salmon and central and north coast chum salmon, to mention a few examples.)