



# Newsletter

December 2006

## OBAC Board Identifies its First Five Priority Topics

It will be a big job “to work to ensure sustainable development and resiliency for the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition region” and as such, the OBAC needs a clear way to move forward. With its funding support from the provincial government to develop a Diversification Plan for the Region, how will the OBAC proceed?

The Diversification Plan will be built by knitting together a suite of strategies that focus on priority topics. It's these strategies that will assess and build recommendations on sector or solution specific opportunities and challenges. The OBAC will be engaging interested community members and expert advisors on the development of the strategies and recommendations. So where will the OBAC begin?

Through the input received at the Community Dialogue sessions earlier this year and through ongoing input received from people and initiatives across the region, a list of priority topics for the OBAC has emerged. The OBAC can keep adding to this list if additional priorities are identified that are regional in scope and we can get the tools and resources to work on it and, the communities collectively want the OBAC to work on it. For some topics the OBAC may initiate strategy work and on other topics, the OBAC may provide input to or partner with others to get the job done.

At this very preliminary stage, we have fifteen topics on our priority topics list and the list continues to evolve as does our understanding of each topic. Early in 2007, the OBAC will begin assessing the current status of and confirming interest in strategy work on the following five of the over fifteen priority topics:

- Retention and Attraction - this is about our region's amenities and needs for existing and new residents and sectors
- Integrated Regional Transportation - this is about the air, road, rail and other transportation opportunities within and beyond our region
- Mineral Exploration
- Regional community-based interests in timber volume transfer and wood fiber supply
- Alternative Energy - including bioenergy, wind and other alternative energy development opportunities

For more information about the OBAC strategy work and the list of topics please check the OBAC website regularly at [www.ominercoalition.ca](http://www.ominercoalition.ca)



*One of OBAC's priorities includes the development of alternative energy including wind power.*

## The 11 Step Process for Strategy Development

Developing strategies must be an inclusive and comprehensive effort and it must deliver timely results and recommendations. As such, strategy development will follow an eleven step process. These will include:

- Step 1 **Scope** - conduct a higher level look at each priority.
- Step 2 **Research** - gather information and assess the current status of each priority.
- Step 3 **Priority Workshop** - identify the 'community of interest' including people with expertise and interests for each priority and invite groups and individuals from OBAC communities who will be engaged in addressing each priority to a workshop to begin the process.
- Step 4 **Action Group** - establish an Action Group to lead the process of dealing with each priority.
- Step 5 **Focus Areas of Interest** - Each Action Group will determine the areas of interest for each priority of importance to the OBAC communities.
- Step 6 **Focused Information Gathering** - what research has or is being conducted to help identify options to pursue opportunities with each of the priorities.
- Step 7 **Analysis** - analyze the research and convey to Action Group.
- Step 8 **'Test' Recommendations** - ensure that all recommendations or options have been tested to ensure they are viable, affordable and would deliver success.
- Step 9 **Develop Strategies** - to deliver recommendations for each priority.
- Step 10 **Roll-out, Communicate and Evaluate** - communicate the recommendations to communities in the OBAC region and measure success after implementation.
- Step 11 **Adapt** - through implementation and the development of other strategies and integration work, there may be a need to go back and adapt the strategy and recommendations.

Some of these steps may be shorter or longer and may rely upon work already being done, depending upon topic-specific needs and opportunities. For OBAC initiated strategies, the coalition anticipates convening Working Groups to advise and work on the strategies and recommendations.

## OBAC Expands to Include More Communities



The OBAC recently announced that in response to requests from the communities of Mackenzie, McBride and Valemount, the OBAC will expand to include these three additional communities.

These communities' interest in joining the effort to diversify the regional economy in the wake of the mountain pine beetle infestation reflects the fact that they share many of the concerns, opportunities and priorities that the OBAC has identified. The OBAC is also looking forward to exploring with First Nations communities and leaders, opportunities to work together on shared priorities to diversify the regional economy and creating opportunities to the benefit of all of our communities.

## 2007-2008 OBAC Business Plan

Work will begin soon on the 2007-2008 OBAC Workplan and Business Plan. This plan will outline the work to be undertaken by OBAC in the coming year and reflect what resources are required to deliver. This plan will include the work and resource needs of the expanded OBAC and be presented to the provincial government for review and funding. OBAC Chair Len Fox is pleased the MLAs representing the communities within the OBAC region have agreed to work with the OBAC to ensure the OBAC gets the resources it requires.

## OBAC Supports New DVD on Mountain Pine Beetle

OBAC will invest \$15,000 to support the collaborative production of a new Knowledge Network video on the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) Epidemic in BC. The video is being produced by well known independent video producer Terry Halleran who has spent a lifetime documenting and reporting on resource issues around British Columbia. OBAC will use this MPB video in its effort to share knowledge about the beetle in our region as part of its overall communications program.

## UNBC Research - Putting a 'Best Before' Date on Beetle Wood

Millions of dead trees later, it's almost pointless to talk of the mountain pine beetle outbreak as a new issue. But thanks to forestry professor Kathy Lewis, we're closer to identifying a "best before" date for all of those red trees.

From the forest industry's perspective, shelf life is a big concern. What happens to the wood quality after a tree is attacked? How long can the dead trees stand in the forest before they're of no use? UNBC professor Kathy Lewis is starting to answer those questions through her research on the shelf life of the trees left in the wake of the tiny bug with the voracious appetite.

The research has discovered that major changes do occur rapidly, but that after about two years, there is little additional decline in wood quality; at least until the tree falls down. Among the changes that occur almost immediately are the tell tale blue staining of the outer wood, a decline in moisture content, and an increased prevalence of cracking throughout the inside of the tree.

"We're not saying that after two years the wood is of no value, but this kind of information is valuable to determining the most appropriate products for this wood as well as the technologies we'll require to process it," says Dr. Lewis, who was named BC Forester of the Year in 1996 in recognition of contributions to forestry teaching and research.

The research was carried out in the University's I.K. Barber Enhanced Forestry Lab, which has state-of-the-art equipment for assessing wood quality and conducting experiments on forest genetics and growth patterns. Using a lab specially outfitted with equipment to analyze tree rings, the researchers were able to precisely identify time-since-death and match the dates to the data they gathered about wood quality.

For the study on shelf life, Dr. Lewis and her research team examined 450 trees from various locations to the southwest of Prince George, near the epicentre of the current pine beetle outbreak. This outbreak is believed to be the largest insect infestation in North American history. To date, the pine beetle has infected 87,000 square kilometres.

*Article and photo submitted by UNBC Communications*



*Dr. Kathy Lewis  
Associate Professor,  
Ecosystem, Science and  
Management (Forestry)*



## OBAC GM to Visit Communities in New Year

In the new year, OBAC General Manager, Elizabeth Andersen will be visiting each OBAC community and providing an update of OBAC progress to date and plans for 2007. Her presentations will focus on the priority topics and the 11 step strategy development process.

## New Office Location

The new OBAC office location and contact information is:  
101 - 1968 Queensway Street  
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## OBAC Website Updates with Expanded Resources

New information is constantly being added to the OBAC website as it develops to become the principal information source for the coalition. Visit the website anytime at: [www.ominecacoalition.ca](http://www.ominecacoalition.ca)



*For information on the Coalition please contact*

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