



Newsletter

Sept/Oct 2007

OBAC Speaks with Local, Provincial and Federal Government Colleagues

During September and October, OBAC leaders spoke with local, provincial and federal elected officials about OBAC at a number of events.

During early September OBAC staff met with our region's four Members of the Legislature to update them on OBAC. The MLA's were very supportive and conveyed encouragement and provided excellent input. At the September Board meeting, Members of Parliament Jay Hill and Dick Harris clarified federal funding MPB response programs and the role of the recently appointed Ministers' MPB Advisory Board. The MP's were also very supportive and look forward to increased communication and working together on the recommendations emerging from OBAC work.

Many OBAC Directors attended the day-long MPB Forum that opened this year's Union of BC Municipalities convention. The audience heard from key provincial and federal agency representatives about the current status of the epidemic and programs aimed at mitigating the impacts on communities of the epidemic. OBAC Chair Len Fox joined representatives from the province's other Beetle Action Coalitions on a panel to outline how communities are working together to respond. Also during UBCM, OBAC Directors met with Premier Gordon Campbell and six provincial Cabinet Ministers to give an update on OBAC activities related to their portfolios, receive input from the Premier and Ministers and discuss opportunities to work together as OBAC strategies and recommendations emerge over the coming months.

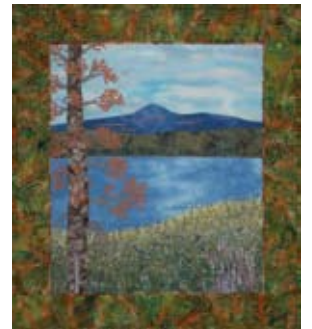
OBAC Vice-Chair Councillor Don Bassermann and General Manager Elizabeth Andersen met with the Government Caucus and Media in Victoria on October 17th to thank the provincial government for recognizing and meeting the need to enable local communities to design and drive our future and to work in partnership with the provincial government to do this; brief them on the challenges and uncertainty and the opportunities that are emerging; and, update the government on the progress that we have made so far in collectively preparing for and responding to the impacts of the mountain pine beetle epidemic in our communities.



Red and Blue Art Show Travels to OBAC Communities

The Red and Blue Beetle Art exhibition that opened in June in Saik'uz south of Vanderhoof will soon be seen in several OBAC communities. The exhibition that has been sponsored by a number of organizations and coordinated by the College of New Caledonia Nechako Campus features multi media art work (including paintings, photographs, sculpture and other art forms) all focusing on the impressions, impacts and opportunities from the beetle epidemic. The art work is accompanied by plain language information explaining the beetle epidemic and impacts to the forest and communities.

The art exhibit will begin making its rounds for three week periods starting in Fort St. James in November 2007, Fraser Lake in January 2008 and Prince George in February 2008. A funding proposal has been submitted to ArtsNow to secure funding to present the exhibit in the balance of the communities in the region. The show helps people understand some of the social, cultural, economic and ecological implications of the beetle epidemic using a non-technical approach and different media (other than just print) to convey information and it speaks to an audience that may benefit from and appreciate a different communication approach (i.e. young people, older people, non-technical people).





OBAC Minerals and Mining Strategy Update

OBAC continued work towards developing its Minerals and Mining Strategy when it hosted a Minerals and Mining Strategy Summit in Prince George on September 18. Thirty people with expert insight attended the day-long session which featured presentations and initial strategy development work that focused on several key elements including:

1. Education, Training & Retraining for the sector
2. Public Awareness, Education & Outreach and Community relations
3. Industry/Sector Outreach
4. Federal-Provincial Processes and Policies
5. Land Base Considerations (Geoscience/ Forestry-Exploration Interactions/ Environmental Stewardship)

One of the key messages heard time and again throughout the day was for OBAC communities to continue supporting geoscience work. It is clear that the exploration community requires accurate and current data to determine where best to spend dollars and focused effort exploring for mineral deposits and in turn, mine development interests rely upon this information to develop mines where a commercially valuable deposit is found. Another key message heard throughout the day is that mineral exploration and mining are seen as a key opportunity to pursue to help diversify the OBAC region economy. The speakers' presentations and the session notes taken during the OBAC Minerals and Mining Strategy Summit are now posted on the OBAC website www.ominecoalition.ca. Some of the ideas offered during the summit for OBAC to pursue during its strategy development include:

- Convene a forum of interested parties to move the ball forward in resolving the shortage of trades workers (Human resources - Industry, Ministry of Advanced Education, Ministry of Education, Colleges, Public School Trustees and Administration, First Nations)
- OBAC communities need to make their support for the industry known to investors to build confidence that OBAC communities welcome the industry
- More work needs to be done to help OBAC communities better understand the industry and its challenges. Raise awareness of the sector in communities and share credible information by having public speakers, town hall meetings.
- Lobby Ministry of Advanced Education for core funding for post-secondary institutions for generic and industry specific applied skills related training
- Facilitate better exchange on focused outreach between forestry interests, mineral exploration interests and provincial regulators of both sectors.
- Make sure that there is a stronger and continued commitment to investment in geoscience as a critical first step to attracting and growing the sector and mine development. More geoscience data in OBAC region required to stimulate exploration as there are many geological challenges and global competition.
- Hold Minerals North in 2009 in Prince George and make it a really big 'attract the sector and the community leaders' event.
- Establish a Prince George/Omineca Exploration Group to get the same momentum going in the eastern and northern part of the OBAC region as is going in the western part of the region with Smithers Exploration Group.
- Build appropriate capacity among all parties to streamline permitting process in a timely manner with a particular focus on support for agencies and First Nations and, reconfigure (redesign) permitting process - high level to technical look.
- Develop a Federal / Provincial commitment to respond to mine approval in an expeditious manner.
- Enable real integration of various land users to assist with various land-use sectors (i.e.: agriculture, forestry, tourism, recreation, etc.)

OBAC has recently retained the firm DPRCA Canada to help the region develop and Minerals and Mining Strategy for the OBAC region. OBAC expects to complete the Minerals and Mining Strategy and two others by late March 2008 and 8 other current priority topics before the end of March 2009. However, OBAC and its members are not waiting for the strategies to be finalized to begin taking action. Following on the heels of the Minerals Summit and responding to individual communities' interest in this topic, OBAC is convening an Action Group to work with DPRCA Canada and OBAC to help guide further development of the Minerals and Mining Strategy during the next few months.

One of the many staggering statistics shared during the summit about the economic impacts of the mining sector is that the cost to develop the new Galore Creek copper/gold mine north of Dease Lake is \$2.1 billion which is considerably more than the estimated costs to host the 2010 Winter

Olympics. Also, at least 8 advanced mineral development projects in Northern BC estimate that they will need 2,500 workers if and when the mines are developed and most are committed to regional hiring. This is why the School of Exploration and Mining at Northwest Community College headquartered in Smithers has waiting lists of people looking for courses to help them land these jobs. Christine O’Gryzlo represents the program and says the results of the Exploration and Mining School is outstanding. 85% of the graduates of the early programs got jobs upon graduation and 60% of those are graduates of First Nations. The program trains people to work as driller helpers, in mining exploration field assessment, basic and advanced prospecting, first aid, camp management, core technician and environmental sampling and site assessment. O’Gryzlo says the future success of the program is based on the partnerships being built today between industry, high schools, post secondary, First Nations and other agencies www.nwcc.bc.ca.



Premier’s Technology Council Invites Input on Growing the Economy with Technology

The Premier’s Technology Council (PTC) Regional Innovation Task force is touring the province in October and November 2007. The objective of the tour is to examine how innovation and technology can contribute to the growth and development of the regions. The PTC provides recommendations to the Premier on how government can improve the growth of technology industries in BC and how technology can be used to better deliver government services http://www.gov.bc.ca/premier/technology_council/.

The Prince George session hosted by the Innovation Resource Centre www.innovate.bc.ca on October 25th in Prince George brought together a number of organizations with special interests in technology development and transfer in the region in a focus group meeting. OBAC was invited to participate to speak about how technology and related opportunities are emerging as key ingredients for diversification in our region. The discussion was far ranging and included questions and answers related to: What are the main economic drivers/assets in this region? How can technology value add to these drivers? What are the current obstacles to these opportunities? What differentiates the economic clusters in your region from similar ones in other regions? How can these clusters be value added to create unique economic development opportunities? Are there any opportunities which may lead to the creation of a centre of excellence in your region? What actions can government take to facilitate change? How can we better leverage existing public assets - to improve research, training and access? How can local institutions collaborate more effectively with industry?

Participants agreed that while efforts to extend broadband connectivity to rural and remote communities have been very valuable, the work is not yet complete. Senior governments need to work collaboratively with large service providers, small businesses and community society’s to complete broadband internet access for northern residents and businesses. Participants also agreed that an emerging limitation to diversifying the economy in the north is gaps in the supply of skilled workers. Focused and nimble collaborative effort across senior governments, the private sector and our northern post-secondary institutions is needed now more than ever to provide training and retraining opportunities so that our region can meet the growing demand for trained professionals and technicians in emerging sectors.



FNMPBI Regional Planning Session on Sustainable Economy

Due to scheduling conflicts, the First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative Funding Forums had to be postponed. But the First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative Regional Planning Sessions on 1) Sustainable Economy and 2) Ecosystem Stewardship went ahead as planned. The purpose of these harmonized strategic planning sessions was to align the efforts of First Nations, partner governments (Government of British Columbia, Government of Canada), third parties and industry in co-managing the MPB epidemic in First Nations territories/communities. The Prince George sessions on Sustainable Economy (October 2) and Ecosystem Stewardship (October 3) were well attended and generated a wealth of good ideas to guide the strategy work. With a specific interest on working



on sustainable economy and community resilience, OBAC attended the Sustainable Economy Prince George Regional Session on October 2nd. The scope of the first day Sustainable Economy theme area focused discussion on:

- accelerated timber harvest;
- use of forest residues;
- economic diversification; and
- protection of cultural values and engagement of First Nations.

An excellent workbook and key readings were presented to participants in advance of the session. Summary reports of each of the sessions will be available along with the presentations and key readings once all of the sessions have been convened. The need for improved harmonization of planning efforts to overcome shared capacity deficits across small communities and, the value of mutual support and engagement for accessing opportunities were repeatedly raised during the discussions <http://www.fnmmpi.com>.

OBAC and Member Communities Submit CEDI Project Proposals

In January 2007 the Government of Canada announced its Mountain Pine Beetle Program with a commitment to invest \$200 million in measures to address both the short-term and long-term impacts of the infestation. The Community Economic Development Initiative or “CEDI” launched on September 7, 2007 with a call for expressions of interest.

The CEDI was created by the government of Canada and is being delivered by Western Economic Diversification to assist forest-dependent communities that have been negatively affected by the beetle. Working with community leaders and other key stakeholders, the department will invest more than \$33 million to support economic growth, job creation and future sustainability of communities adversely affected by the widespread infestation. Some expected outcomes include:

- successful community adjustment;
- new start-ups and enhanced existing businesses;
- increased business capacity, productivity, and viability;
- increased skills, knowledge and competencies for community members;
- increased participation in international markets;
- increased community participation;
- creation of mechanisms for community and government collaboration and coordination;
- enhanced capacity for communities to implement strategic plans; and
- greater linkages between communities and educational facilities.

The timelines for this program are: September 7, 2007 - Call for Expressions of Interest opened; October 19, 2007 - Deadline for submitting Expressions of Interest; November 9, 2007 - Western Economic Diversification Canada notifies applicants whether your Expression of Interest will be invited for a full proposal; November 30, 2007 - Deadline for submitting the full proposal. March 31, 2009 - Approved and funded projects must be completed.

Immediately following the call for Expressions of Interest (EoI), OBAC checked in with the network of community economic development people across the region to offer support where needed. Great ideas emerged across the region and OBAC was asked to participate in and provide regional scale endorsement for over 30 proposals. In working with interests across the region, OBAC was alerted to several regional scale needs that have now been coordinated across groups across the region. OBAC will be championing one of these - a Regional Bioenergy Opportunity and Grid Development Needs Assessment, should the EoI be approved. We understand that the total number of EoI's that were submitted by communities and organizations across the OBAC region likely exceeds 150 and across the province over 250 proposals were reportedly submitted to WED.



For information on the Coalition please contact
Elizabeth Andersen, Manager

Phone: (250) 563-7005 • Toll Free: 1-866-563-7005 • Fax: (250) 562-7880
www.ominercoalition.ca
 email: info@ominercoalition.ca