

The SCRD Board has committed to engage in a strategic planning process at least every 2 years. The outcome of this process is a set of 3-5 strategic priorities which guide decision making and the allocation of both financial and human resources. This year's process has just taken place and this time included participation from both the Sechelt and Gibsons councils. Although the set of strategic priorities endorsed at the 1 ½ day retreat has not yet been formally adopted by the SCRD Board at the time of writing this column, I can report that the topic that made it to the top of the list was the development and implementation of a sustainability plan and a regional climate action plan.

The word "sustainability" has become one of the most overused and misused terms in our lexicon so the Board's first task will be to agree upon a definition. I have always liked the definition put forward by the UN's Bruntland Commission Report in 1987: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." If we adopt a definition like this it would mean that we would be giving careful consideration to the impacts of our decisions on our children and their children.

During the discussions about sustainability at our Strategic Planning retreat, the concept of the "quadruple bottom line" was also raised. Most of us are familiar with a financial bottom line. The concept of a quadruple bottom line not only uses the criteria of financial responsibility and economic prosperity in decision making, but also considers environmental sustainability, social equity and cultural vitality. All four aspects are interrelated. Without balanced consideration of all these components, true sustainability is not possible.

Here is an example. Recreation programs and facilities are expensive to build and operate. But the financial bottom line is only one consideration when making decisions about recreation services. There are economic benefits in such things as job creation, tourism development and the attraction of skilled people to a community that offers such amenities. There are also positive impacts on community health and well being and the social benefits of creating places and opportunities for people of all ages and cultures to congregate. Furthermore, there are the economic and environmental benefits of reducing energy consumption through efficient building design. This illustrates the principle that true sustainability is achieved when enhancement of one area creates positive benefits in all areas. Quadruple bottom line analysis ensures that sustainability pervades all decisions and actions whether the issue concerns asset management, water services, transportation, recreation or land use planning.

In my next column I will fill you in on our progress with Climate Action Planning which the provincial government has made a requirement for all local governments. Let me know your thoughts: [donna\\_shugar@hotmail.com](mailto:donna_shugar@hotmail.com).