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Convening for Action on Vancouver Island

Creating our future, one conversation at a time

The British Columbia landscape is being transformed by settlement and economic growth. While the province has been experiencing enhanced social and economic well-being, the need to mitigate pressures on land and water resources has provided a driver for a 'green infrastructure' movement that is:

- water-centric (planning with a view to water, whether for a single site or the entire province),
- founded on a natural systems approach, and
- dependent upon partnerships.

Convening for Action on Vancouver Island (CAVI) is a pilot program at a

regional scale that is being implemented under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia.

What is CAVI?

CAVI was formally launched in September 2006 by means of a consultation workshop held in Victoria as an adjunct to the Water in the City Conference. The CAVI Partnership is comprised of five organizations:

- British Columbia Water & Waste Association (BCWWA)
- Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Community Services
- Green Infrastructure Partnership

CAVI is co-funded by the province and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia. The Water Sustainability Committee of the BCWWA is the managing partner and is providing program delivery. CAVI is built upon the earlier BCWWA partnership work on Vancouver Island that resulted in two workshops being held September 2005 and May 2006, respectively. These workshops sought to identify the major challenges on Vancouver Island as a result of accelerated growth.

A fundamental component of the CAVI initiative is a draft Positive Settlement Strategy for Vancouver Island that identifies the necessary link between accommodating settlement growth and protecting the ecological systems upon which our community's well-being relies.

What does CAVI do?

The purpose of CAVI is to provide leadership, coordination, research and education for practitioners (primarily local government administrators, engineers, planners and elected persons) to plan for management of sustainable water resources in the context of burgeoning settlement activity.

What does CAVI want to do?

By 2010, the CAVI vision is that Vancouver Island will be well on its way to achieving water sustainability. Between now and 2010, the CAVI mission is to:

- provide leadership on water sustainability and integrate with other groups;

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- bring together local government and the development community;
- provide access to expertise;
- encourage introduction of a 'design with nature' way-of-thinking in local government decision processes;
- celebrate examples of green infrastructure that achieve 'design with nature' outcomes; and
- evolve a framework for water-centric planning that is keyed to accepting and managing risk, learning by doing and rewarding innovation.

Creating our future

As a shoulder event to the Gaining Ground Summit Conference in Victoria in June, CAVI held a consultation workshop entitled *Creating Our Future: What will Vancouver Island look like in 50 Years?*

Held on a Sunday, the workshop was by invitation. Attendance was capped at 50. The event attracted elected officials and senior managers from 19 local governments and a balanced mix of representatives from provincial ministries, First Nations, the private sector, the real estate industry and academic field.

The workshop defined a vocabulary hierarchy and provided context for *green value, designing with nature, green infrastructure* and *water sustainability...* from the shoreline to the watershed, and from the development site to the municipality. The day was high energy from start to finish, achieved its objective of celebrating Vancouver Island success stories and set the stage for moving 'green value' from concept to practice on Vancouver Island.

Building on success

Building on the momentum generated by the Creating Our Future Workshop, CAVI is partnering with three regional districts and their member municipalities to implement the *Showcasing Green Infrastructure Innovation Series* in September/October; and the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities to hold a *Mayors & Chairs Green Infrastructure Forum*, likely in December.


Each Showcasing Innovation event comprises presentations in the morning and a tour of project sites in the afternoon. By celebrating on-the-ground successes the goal is to promote

networking, build regional capacity and move 'from awareness to action' through sharing of approaches, tools, experiences and lessons learned.

It starts with a conversation

The strength of the CAVI approach on Vancouver Island is the one-on-one engagement of its partners who 'buy in' to the vision of water-centric planning. The process is cumulative, as others from diverse backgrounds are drawn to the common goal of achieving water sustainability.

Each progressive step builds upon the previous success story, with the recognition that, eventually, all the players must be at the table, including government, business owners, developers, consultants, First Nations, academics and citizens. Only through such an inclusive partnership will the fundamental shift towards integrated 'design with nature' water-centric land use planning on Vancouver Island become firmly established and practiced. 💧





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