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Mayor and Council
District of Squamish
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July 10, 2018

RE: Mamquam Blind Channel Dredging and Maintenance

The Mamquam Blind Channel portion of Squamish harbour has long needed dredging attention. An action plan and the resources and coordination to realize it are required.

At present, channel navigation at lower tides is seriously impaired by material entering from the Stawamus River. There is also need for coordinated plans for land protection and habitat restoration at the mouth of the river as well as disposition of dredge spoils including among various pending land development projects.

Remedies for the mouth of the Stawamus have long been discussed. However, changes in the river bring new erosion and debris flow circumstances to be taken into account.

Marine safety, community economic development and quality of life are affected by navigation channel constraints in this key zone of the harbour. Vessels are encountering difficulties and are being grounded with increasing regularity. The harbour is avoided by potential marine tourist traffic. Commercial marine transport operations are also affected by channel conditions.

Delayed attention to these issues will only mean additional mitigation and remediation costs in future.

The last significant channel maintenance dredging project was undertaken by federal agencies in March 1986.

Transport Canada divested itself of various responsibilities for Squamish Harbour following *Canada Marine Act* changes taking effect in 1999.

During the past three decades there has been only limited maintenance dredging by the (now closed) sawmill operation and a small project undertaken by the District of Squamish in 2013 to alleviate conditions at the Stawamus delta front. Two local initiatives during 2006-08 and 2012-13 to organize and seek funding for the major maintenance dredging required did not succeed.

The Chamber wishes to acknowledge and congratulate the District of Squamish on its recently completed Marine Action Strategy, which refers to the important “gateway” function of Squamish harbour for tourist visitors as well as commercial goods transport.

The Strategy identifies “Initiate scoping and engagement on dredge program, priority navigation maintenance activities, and funding strategy” among priority action items.

There is an immediate need for project planning to get underway, considering timeline constraints (incl. minimizing risk to fisheries) and fundraising needs. The need for a long term, ongoing maintenance strategy must also be emphasized.

A significant number of stakeholders are affected by neglected channel maintenance: Squamish Nation; marine commercial transportation (e.g., construction, forest industry); marine services (e.g., search and rescue, training); recreational boating; and the tourism industry.

The Chamber encourages the three levels of government – District, Provincial and Federal – to play coordinated leadership roles to address planning, regulatory compliance and funding needs in collaboration with the Squamish Nation, other land owners, and key stakeholders in Mamquam Blind Channel maintenance.

Sincerely,

Rob Weys
President, Squamish Chamber of Commerce

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



cc:

Squamish Nation Chiefs and Council

Squamish Harbour Authority

RCM Search and Rescue Station 04

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development

– Sea to Sky District

Squamish Yacht Club

Squamish & District Forestry Association

Tourism Squamish